

**Offices of the Dean of Student Life
Women's Resource Center
AMPLIFY | Women's Mentoring Circle
Spring 2021**

Purpose of Assessment

The Women's Resource Center (WRC) wanted to assess the experiences of both the mentees and mentors who participated in its mentorship program, AMPLIFY | Women's Mentoring Circle, during the spring 2021 semester. This was the first time Student Life Studies (SLS) has assisted in developing surveys for the participants of the program.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations that the WRC may take based on the results. However, staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the community. Staff members are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' and mentors' experiences.

- Most mentees and mentors responding to the survey indicated they found the connection with one another the most beneficial aspect of participating in AMPLIFY | Women's Mentoring Circle. Mentees benefited from advice and encouragement from mentors, and the reflection that the relationship spawned. Mentors benefitted from supporting and guiding another. A slight majority of respondents found the mentor matching platform provided satisfactory matches, although some would like to have been matched with someone in their same career field, and nearly one-quarter of respondents indicated they were not matched. Mentees indicated that desired industry or career path and specific focus areas (communication, leadership, job search strategies) as the two criteria they found most important when matching mentor to mentee.
 - Staff may want to review how recruiting efforts for mentees and mentors can be career field and industry-focused. Requesting mentors to provide information regarding their current or previous occupations, industries or field of study and then purposefully recruit mentors in under-represented fields. Likewise, promoting the mentor program to colleges and student organizations who involve students interested in specific industries and occupations represented by the mentors may help result in more synchronistic matches for both mentors and mentees.
- Many of the mentors and mentees indicated they did not use the mentor program platform beyond their initial connection. Mentees and mentors noted the platform was cumbersome to work with, navigating the connection plan was challenging and its activities just felt like more homework for mentees. Likewise, when asked to rate the helpfulness of the five elements of the connection plan, all elements' average ratings were neutral and approximately one-fifth to one-third of respondents did not complete each element of the connection plan listed.
 - Staff may want to consider developing reference materials to provide instructions on how-to-use the platform that can be accessed on-demand (website) by participants. Including more information about the connection activities, either within the platform or as part of the reference materials may increase their use and usefulness, as some participants also asked that the activities be clearer, more concise, and more accessible to initiate discussions between mentors and mentees. Perhaps fewer activities would make those available more impactful as well.
- Both mentors and mentees noted they would like guidance regarding the expectations of the mentor/mentee relationship. Mentees new to this type of relationship indicated it would help to know what type of questions to ask, and mentors wanted mentees to behave more professionally, in the least, responding to outreach from the mentors. Including expectations from both the mentee and mentors in

their respective training (and in available reference materials) may provide better management of expectations of both roles.

Method and Sample

A survey was produced using Qualtrics®, a survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The 25-question spring 2021 survey contained 12 quantitative and 13 qualitative questions and was sent to all mentors and mentees who participated in the program during the spring 2021 semester. The survey began distribution on June 21, 2021, and three reminders were sent to those who had not completed the survey before it closed on July 17, 2021. Of the 383 who received the assessment, 90 responded yielding a response rate of 23%.

Collected data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®. Due to branching technology, not all respondents of the surveys saw all questions.

Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviation (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Comparisons to the fall 2020 semester's survey data, collected through a survey designed and administered by WRC, are shown where appropriate. The student demographics listed were accessed from the official student records based on students' Universal Identification Number (UIN). Summary themes are contained in this report; the entire list of qualitative responses can be found in a separate document.

The survey opened with questions asking respondents to indicate their role in the AMPLIFY | Women's Mentoring Circle during the spring. Of the 90 respondents, 80% indicated they were a mentor and 20% indicated they were a mentee. Next, respondents were asked to select from a list of options how often they met with their mentor or mentee this spring. As noted in Table 1, respondents indicated most frequently meeting with their mentor/mentee three to five times during the spring semester. Nearly one-quarter indicated they were not matched; these respondents saw no further questions and ended the survey. Table 1 lists data in order of ascending times met.

How often did you meet your mentor/mentee this spring semester?	Spring 2021 Response Percent [n=90]	Fall 2020 Response Percent [n=25]
Zero times	14%	4%
1-2 times	18%	20%
3-5 times	26%	16%
6-plus times	19%	48%
I was not matched	23%	12%

Table 1: Frequency Meeting Mentors/Mentees

In a select-all-that-apply response, participants were asked to report the format of their meetings with their mentors/mentees during the spring. As noted in Table 2, on the next page, over three-quarters reported meeting virtually. Those who did not maintain contact with their mentee/mentor throughout the semester were asked to share the reasons or barriers that prevented them from maintaining contact. Twenty-eight responded and one-quarter indicated N/A or that they were not connected with a mentee (mentor response). Four of the responses came from mentees, who noted scheduling or mentor trouble with the platform as the barriers to contact. Mentor responses also included indications of scheduling challenges of mentees as barriers to contact or meeting with mentees, and some noted their mentees just never responded.

How did you meet with your mentor this spring semester?	Spring 2021 Response Percent [n=54]	Fall 2020 Response Percent [n=25]
Virtually (Zoom, FaceTime, etc....)	78%	68%
Text	26%	12%
Email	21%	12%
Phone call	19%	24%
In Person	11%	12%

Table 2: Format of Meeting

Respondents who identified themselves as mentors were asked how they felt their mentor-mentee relationship went during the spring semester and if there were changes that could be made in the program to foster a stronger relationship. Thirty-nine mentors responded and about half said they felt their mentor-mentee relationship went well, and that they had a good experience. Some noted their mentees were busy and that they were only able to meet one or two times but thought the meeting was beneficial for their mentees. Others were not as positive about the relationship as they indicated their mentee did not seem interested in the relationship, thought that a better match within the same professional field would have been better, and a few were just not able to connect with their mentee. Suggestions to foster stronger relationships included training with mentees to include expectations of both the mentor and mentee roles, perhaps a video demonstrating a mentor-mentee relationship and clarity about the time commitment expected from both. Some commented that the platform was a challenge, and the exercises were viewed as just another task or assignment that mentees had to do during the semester.

All respondents were next asked to identify the programs they attended during the spring. As shown in Table 3, the mentor training was most frequently selected.

Did you attend any of the following programs?	Spring 2021 Response Percent [n=49]	Fall 2020 Response Percent [n=25]
Mentor training	82%	76%
February social	20%	36%*
Mentee training	18%	20%
<i>Using Social Media as a Tool in Networking and the Job Search</i>	12%	8%
March program - <i>Internships</i>	6%	24%**

Table 3: Program Attendance

*October Social

**November program

Those who indicated attending the mentor or mentee trainings were asked what else would be helpful for the WRC to cover. Four respondents who attended the mentee training noted that having a better understanding of the role of a mentee, perhaps through reflective questions or group discussions in preparation for that first meeting with their mentor. Another recommended a minimum of one meeting monthly with mentors. Some of the 26 who attended the mentor training had similar suggestions, clarifying for both mentors and mentees what a mentor can typically do, topics in which they can assist a mentee and the responsibility of the mentees in the relationship. Mentors also suggested providing an overview of campus resources for them, in case they need to refer their

mentee. Time commitment expectations, clearer training regarding the platform and an overview of the purpose planned activities required through the platform were also suggested as part of the training by mentors.

All respondents were asked what topics they would like to see covered in the educational programs in future semesters. Twenty responded; the six mentees suggested topics covered include advocating for oneself, expected career progression, getting jobs after college and networking. Mentors suggested training cover topics such as professionalism in communications, resume building, interview skills, important relationships in building a career, work-life balance, personal finance. A few wanted to include updates on what was happening on campus.

Respondents who indicated they were mentees were presented five statements and asked to select those statements they felt applied to their relationship with their mentor. As noted in Table 4, nearly two-thirds considered their mentor helped them reflect on experiences during the spring semester. Those who selected the “other” response were asked to elaborate, and the one respondent indicated that they were well matched and made a great connection.

From the below statements, please select any of those that you feel are true regarding your relationship with your mentor	Spring 2021 Response Percent [n=16]	Fall 2020 Response Percent [n=4]
My mentor helped me to reflect on my experiences this semester.	63%	50%
I consider my mentor a person to whom I can speak about difficult issues.	56%	50%
My mentor helped me expand my social and/or professional network.	44%	100%
My mentor helped me reach my goals this semester.	44%	75%
Other	6%	--

Table 4: Relationship with Mentor

Mentees were asked how participating in the AMPLIFY program helped them to meet their goals for the semester. Thirteen responded, some indicated their mentor helped them polish their resume, practiced interviewing, conducted a job search, and prepare for their future career. Others spoke about finding the advice from their mentor helpful in meeting their goals by being able to talk to them, reflect and learn from their mentor’s experience. Others noted their mentoring relationship helped them improve their work-life balance and take risks.

All respondents were asked to share what aspects of the AMPLIFY | Women’s Mentoring Circle they found most beneficial. Fifty-four mentors and mentees responded, and aspects shared by the 14 mentees responding included connecting to their mentor, connecting with someone in their career field, their encouraging words and the reflections. Some mentees mentioned more career-oriented aspects, such as getting help with internship applications, networking and being able to ask questions of someone in their career field. However, two mentees noted they did not find the discussion topics and modules helpful as they were not geared towards their professional field. Mentors spoke about the connection with a young person, and the opportunity to support another and guide them as the aspect of AMPLIFY | Women’s Mentoring Circle most beneficial to them. Some also mentioned the training activities, the monthly meetings, and the matching portion of the platform as they thought it worked well.

Self-identified mentees were asked further questions about the mentor matching process of the platform. A brief explanation of the connection plan in the platform preceded the questions, noting that it provided possible mentor matches determined by their responses to questions, which include certain criteria, such as focus areas by which they would like to be mentored, industries of interest identities and classification. Respondents were asked to select two criteria from a list of options, which they felt were most important when being matched to a mentor. Table 5 shows respondents selected desired industry or career path most. No one selected classification or criteria not currently included. Those who selected “other criteria not currently included” could provide their input; no one selected that choice, thus there was no input.

From the below items, please select two of the criteria which you believe are most important when matching.	Spring 2021 Response Percent [n=16]	Fall 2020 Response Percent [n=4]
Desired industry or career path	94%	50%
Specific focus areas (communication, graduate school, goal setting, job search strategies, leadership, networking, personal support, professional school admission, work/life balance)	87%	75%
Identities (Race, Ethnicity, Religion, Sexuality, and/or Gender Identity)	6%	--
Classification (faculty, former student, staff or peer)	--	35%
Other criteria not currently included	--	--

Table 5: Platform Mentor Match Criteria

Mentee respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the mentor match selections presented for them by the platform. Of the 16 who responded, 38% were very satisfied, 19% satisfied, 25% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 19% said they were dissatisfied. No one indicated they were very dissatisfied (Mean=3.75/5.00, sd=1.18). Spring respondents were less satisfied with their matches provided by the platform than fall 2020 mentee respondents (fall Mean=4.00/5.00, sd=1.41, n=4). Respondents were then asked to elaborate on their reported satisfaction level. Thirteen provided a response. Those who were very satisfied or satisfied generally indicated their connections to their mentors worked well, that they had common interests and even if they met a few times, it really helped. One noted that they chose a mentor with a low match percentage but took that chance and found the mentor helped in many ways. Those who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied or were dissatisfied noted that the mentors were not in the same career or educational field as the mentee.

Respondents were also asked to rate the helpfulness of five elements of the connection plan. If respondents did not complete a specific element of the connection plan, they could select the response “Did not complete this element of the connection plan:” those responses were not included in Table 6, but their frequency percent and the number of responses are displayed in Table 7, both on the following page. Mind Maps and Work, Health, Love & Play Gauge survey were found equally most helpful; however, the response average for all elements hovered near the neutral rating, like the fall means. Also, as noted in Table 7, nearly one-third of respondents did not complete the Mind Maps, Figuring out What Makes You Happier -Journal or Building your Compass elements.

Element of the connection plan	Very Helpful (5)	Helpful (4)	Neutral (3)	Unhelpful (2)	Very Unhelpful (1)	Spring 2021 Mean (sd) [n]	Fall 2020 Mean (sd) [n]
Mind Maps	28%	21%	24%	17%	10%	3.38 (1.35) [29]	3.38 (.87) [13]
Work, Health, Love & Play Gauge Survey	14%	38%	26%	14%	7%	3.38 (1.13) [42]	3.44 (.96) [16]
Figuring out what will make you happier-journal	17%	34%	24%	14%	10%	3.34 (1.23) [29]	3.38 (.77) [13]
Building your Compass	6%	34%	34%	16%	9%	3.13 (1.07) [32]	3.33 (.62) [15]

Table 6: Connection Plan Helpfulness

Element of the connection plan	Did not complete this element of the connection plan Spring 2021 Frequency % [n]	Did not complete this element of the connection plan Fall 2020 Frequency % [n]
Mind Maps	30% [27]	36% [9]
Figuring out What Will Make You Happier-journal	30% [27]	36% [9]
Building your Compass	27% [24]	28% [7]
Work, Health, Love & Play Gauge Survey	17% [15]	24% [6]

Table 7: Connection Plan – Did Not Complete Element

All respondents were asked if they used the platform for communication and/or connection plan with their mentee/mentor throughout the semester and why or why not. Fifty-eight responded; 14 mentees and 44 mentors. About half of the mentees indicated not using the platform beyond initial matching and meeting set-up, as independent email, texting and phone calls between mentee and mentor seemed easier. Others indicated using the platform for communication sparingly, but navigating that system proved challenging. About half of the mentors indicated they did not use the platform, some noting that they found the platform cumbersome, hard to navigate and their mentee preferred communication via text, email, zoom or phone calls outside the platform. Some noted using the platform for the initial meeting and the exercises only. Suggestions included being able to download exercises so they could be used outside the platform, providing a shortened, on-demand training for the platform, and a way to disable notifications from the platform. Some mentors noted they did not use the platform because their mentees never responded. The mentors who indicated using the platform also tended to use it for

messaging, scheduling meetings only, or for the exercises in conjunction with outside communication and meetings with their mentee.

All respondents were asked if they had any additional feedback about the connection plan. Twenty-one chose to provide feedback, although three of those 21 said N/A or no. A few commented that the activities within the plan seemed to be busywork, felt like homework and thought those pieces needed to be optional. Others found that material helpful in initiating discussions with one another but thought the exercises needed to be clearer and more concise.

When asked how WRC could improve the AMPLIFY | Women's Mentoring Circle, thirty-one responded. Common suggestions included recruiting more mentees, more in-person activities, and clearer expectations of the mentees and mentors participating in the program. Suggestions also included providing a training document and video regarding the communication plan and platform for those who cannot attend the scheduled training, disabling platform notifications and more concise, unforced activities for mentors and mentees to complete. Some provided detailed suggestions, such as one for creating mentor/mentee clusters which include groups of mentors and mentees with common interests and offer career topic workshops.

Respondents were asked if they planned to continue their involvement in AMPLIFY | Women's Mentoring Circle. Of the 62 respondents, 65% indicated yes, 27% chose undecided and 8% chose no. In fall 2020 62% of 21 respondents indicated yes, 24% chose undecided and 14% chose no. Those who chose no were asked why they had decided not to continue in AMPLIFY | Women's Mentoring Circle and three of the five who responded indicated they were not continuing because they were graduating. The other two noted they were engaging in other mentoring relationships with individuals who were involved in their career fields.

Background

Per their website <https://studentlife.tamu.edu/wrc/>, the Women's Resource Center "pursues equity and enhances the campus climate for women through visibility, advocacy, support and programming. The center advocates by educating campus and community constituencies on women's issues and functions as a resource and referral center." A signature program of the Women's Resource Center, AMPLIFY | Women's Mentoring Circle is described on the WRC website as:

A collaboration between the Women's Resource Center and the Aggie Women Network, a Constituent Network of The Association of Former Students. AMPLIFY provides Texas A&M University students access to Aggie women whose professional and personal accomplishments align with the student's ambitions. These connections help mentees build career relationships. Mentors gain the opportunity to remain connected to the University and give back to the next generation of Aggie women.

As of the fall 2020 semester, applications to participate in the AMPLIFY program were available and managed via the Aggie Mentoring Network platform.

Project Details

The Department of Student Life Studies provides quality assessment services, resources and assessment training for departments in the Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs and student organizations. Services by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Life Studies can be found at <https://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, division staff can follow Student Life Studies on Facebook.

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