Veterans Resource and Support Center
PAVE Team Lead and Peer Advisor Learning Outcomes Assessment
2016-2017

Background

According to its website http://aggieveterans.tamu.edu/p-a-v-e/ Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE) is a "peer support program that connects incoming student veterans with student veterans already on campus in order to help them navigate college life, identify challenges they are facing, refer them to appropriate resources on or off campus, and provide ongoing support to their academic and personal ventures." The PAVE program originated as a collaboration between the University of Michigan Depression Center and the Department of Psychiatry, and the Student Veterans of America. The Texas A&M University Veterans Resource and Support Center (VRSC) started offering student veterans the PAVE program in 2014. In the 2016-2017 academic year, over 120 student veterans participated, linked to approximately 15 Peer Advisors who assisted these incoming student veterans. Additionally, Peer Advisors were assigned one of three Team Leads, who were responsible for the management, coordination and training of their assigned Peer Advisors.

In 2016 PAVE was designated as a Division of Student Affairs High Impact Practice (HIP) for the participating Peer Advisors and Team Leads. The VRSC contacted Student Life Studies to provide assistance in assessing the defined learning outcome and the reflection exercise for the Peer Advisors and Team Leads. The learning outcome created for the Peer Advisors and Team Leads for the spring semester of 2017 is as follows: By participating in PAVE, Peer Advisors and Team Leads will further develop their interpersonal and written communication skills through collaborative training and self-reflection exercises. Rubrics were developed to measure interpersonal and written communication skills, adapted from the Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs Student Leader Learning Outcomes (SLLO) project interpersonal and written communication rubrics. This was the first time Student Life Studies has worked with VRSC to assess the PAVE Peer Advisors and Team Lead learning for this high impact practice.

Method and Sample

Four rubrics were developed and designed using Teleform®, survey design software that creates scannable forms and databases. Two rubrics included four interpersonal communication outcome statements (dimensions) in which the PAVE Team Leads and Peer Advisors would rate themselves; one interpersonal communication rubric would be used at the beginning of the semester as a pre-assessment, and a second rubric containing the same outcome statements would be used as a follow-up self-evaluation at the end of the semester, in a post-then analysis/rating of skills per outcome statement. The post-then interpersonal communication rubric also contained two qualitative questions (reflection prompts). Similarly, another two rubrics included four written communication outcome statements in which the PAVE Team Leads and Peer Advisors would rate themselves; again, one written communication rubric would be used at the beginning of the semester as a pre- assessment and another rubric containing the same written communication statements would be used as a follow-up self-evaluation at the end of the semester, in a post/then analysis/rating of skills per outcome statement. The data from all four rubrics was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, Microsoft Excel® and Word®.

Nine Peer Advisors and Team Leads were provided the pre-assessment interpersonal and written communications rubrics, and all completed them March 22nd through March 29th , 2017. The follow-up post/then written communication rubric was distributed and completed between April 12th and April 17st, 2017; and six of eight who received the rubrics completed that follow-up self-evaluation. The follow-up post/then interpersonal communication rubric which included two reflection prompts, was also distributed and completed between April 12th and April 17th, 2017 and six of eight who received that rubric completed it.

Results

Results include frequencies, means, and standard deviations (sd) for the number of people (n) who responded to the outcome statement. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. The outcome statements or dimensions presented on both written communication rubrics and the pre-assessment interpersonal communication rubric used the follow a four point rating scale: 1-Beginner (beginning to

acquire this skill), 2-Developing (developing in this area), 3-Competent (does this skill pretty well), and 4-Advanced (above average in this skill). The post-then interpersonal communication rubric used a five point rating scale of 1-Novice (awareness or base level knowledge), 2-Transition from Novice to Intermediate, 3-Intermediate (apply the concept somewhat), 4-Transition from Intermediate to Advance and 5-Advanced (intentional and effective application).

Table 1 on the next page shows the Team Lead and Peer Advisors' self-evaluations regarding their written communication skills on the pre-assessment as well as near the end of the spring semester, rating their skill level again at the beginning and then after their experience serving in their position. The Team Leads and Peer Advisors rated their skills higher in the pre-assessment than in the before condition of the post-then rubric. When reviewing the results recorded on the post-then rubric, growth was reported by the Team Leads and Peer Advisors regarding all outcomes in the post-then analysis of their skills. After their work with the mentees, the Team Lead and Peer Advisors were most confident about their abilities to express purpose through their written communications and least confident in structure and clarity of expression through their written communications. Outcome statements are presented in descending order of the after mean within the table.

When reviewing the Team Lead and Peer Advisors' individual results from their ratings on the post-then written communication rubric, four of the six (67%) showed one level growth in at least three outcome dimensions from beginning to end of term. Two reported no growth in all four of the outcomes dimensions; however, one of those students rated themselves at the top level in the before condition for all four dimensions. None of the students indicated decreases in any of the written communication outcomes dimensions from the beginning to end of the semester.

Outcome Statements	Advanced (above average in this skill) (4)	Competent (does this skill pretty well) (3)	Developing (Developing in this area) (2)	Beginner (Beginning to acquire this skill) (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
Purpose	Can consistently identify and adjust to specific purposes of communication.	Can frequently (more often than not) identify and adjust to specific purposes of communication.	Can occasionally identify and adjust to specific purposes of communication.	Can occasionally identify the purpose of communication, however, does not adjust communication to address these purposes.	
Pre-assessment	33%	57%	11%	--	3.22 (.67) [9]
Before	29%	29%	43%	--	2.86 (.90) [7]
After	57%	43%	--	--	3.57 (.53) [7]
Context	Consistently selects the correct and appropriate method in which to communicate written information. Is fully aware of the needs of individual mentees and tries to meet those needs.	Frequently selects the correct and appropriate method in which to communicate written information. Is aware of most of the needs of individual mentees and tries to meet those needs, but misses other needs.	Occasionally selects the correct and appropriate method in which to communicate written information. Is aware of some of the needs of individual mentees and tries to meet those needs, but misses other needs.	Infrequently selects the correct and appropriate method in which to communicate written information. Assumes all mentees have same needs, does not seek to address individual needs	
Pre-assessment	22%	78%	--	--	3.22 (.44) [9]
Before	14%	43%	29%	14%	2.57 (.98) [7]
After	57%	29%	14%	--	3.43 (.79) [7]
Structure	Main idea is consistently presented early in the text. Information is consistently presented in order of importance. Communication is consistently appropriate length.	Main idea is frequently presented early in the text. Information is frequently presented in order of importance. Communication is frequently appropriate length.	Main idea is occasionally presented early in the text. Information is occasionally presented in order of importance. Communication is occasionally appropriate length.	Main idea is not presented early in the text. Information is not presented in order of importance. Communication is not the appropriate length.	
Pre-assessment	22%	57%	22%	--	3.00 (.71) [9]
Before	14%	57%	--	29%	2.57 (1.13) [7]
After	43%	43%	14%	--	3.29 (.76) [7]
Clarity	Consistently provides a clear main idea supported by rich, vivid and powerful details.	Frequently provides a clear main idea supported by sufficient, distinct details.	Occasionally provides a clear main idea supported by sufficient details.	Main idea is ambiguous; supporting details stray from main point.	
Pre-assessment	--	78%	22%	--	2.78 (.44) [9]
Before	14%	43%	29%	14%	2.57 (.98) [7]
After	43%	43%	14%	--	3.29 (.76) [7]

Table 1: Students Self-Evaluation Rating: Written Communication Pre-Assessment and Post-Then Rubrics

Table 2, shows the Team Lead and Peer Advisors self-evaluation of their interpersonal communication skills, filled out as the pre-assessment. They rated their listening skills highest, with over 85% rating themselves at the competent or advanced level.

Outcome Statements	Advanced (above average in this skill) (4)	Competent (does this skill pretty well) (3)	Developing (Developing in this area) (2)	Beginner (Beginning to acquire this skill) (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
Listening	Always attentive to others when they speak.	Frequently attentive to others when they speak.	Occasionally inattentive to others when they speak.	Consistently inattentive to others when they speak.	
Pre-assessment	33%	57%	11%	--	3.22 (.67) [9]
Context	Fully aware of mentee(s) needs: Changes language, demeanor, and delivery to best match the mentee(s).	Aware of different needs of mentee(s) and frequently changes language, demeanor, and delivery to best match mentee(s).	Aware of different needs of mentee(s) but makes little effort to change language, demeanor, and delivery.	Unaware of the needs of mentee(s) and makes no changes in language, demeanor, and delivery.	
Pre-assessment	22%	67%	11%	--	3.11 (.60) [9]
Information Seeking	Asks questions when mentee(s) do not seem to understand what is being said; questions are consistently pertinent to main ideas.	Asks questions when mentees(s) do not seem to understand what is being said; most questions are pertinent and allow the mentee(s) to effectively communicate main ideas.	Asks questions when mentees(s) do not seem to understand what is being said; few questions are pertinent and does not allow the mentee(s) to effectively communicate main ideas.	Exhibits little or no interest in information being shared; no information seeking questions asked.	
Pre-assessment	--	100%	--	--	3.00 (.00) [8]
Empathy	Frequently puts self in others' shoes; accepts and understands the feelings and motivations of others; takes steps to deepen understanding.	Sometimes puts self in others' shoes; sometimes accepts and understands the feelings and motivations of others.	Accepts others' feelings; does not understand others' motivations and shows little interest in seeking to understand others.	Frequently finds it difficult to accept others' feelings; does not understand others' motivations and shows no or little interest in others.	
Pre-assessment	--	44%	33%	--	2.89 (.78) [9]

Table 2: Students Self-Evaluation Ratings: Interpersonal Communication Pre-Assessment Rubric

Near the end of the spring semester, the Team Leads and Peer Advisors rated their interpersonal communication skill level again at the beginning of the semester and then after their experience serving in their position using a post-then rubric. As the interpersonal communication post-then rubric and the interpersonal communication pre-assessment rubric did not use the same scale, comparisons of students' ratings were not made. However, as shown in Table 3 on the next page, when evaluating themselves using the post-then rubric, the Team Leads and Peer Advisors again rated their listening skills highest, and noted growth in all four outcome dimensions measured.

When reviewing the Team Lead and Peer Advisors' individual results from their ratings on the post-then interpersonal communication rubric, four of the six (67%) showed one level growth in at least three outcome dimensions from beginning to end of term. One reported no growth in all four of the outcomes dimensions. None of the students indicated decreases in any of the written communication outcomes dimensions from the beginning to end of the semester.

Outcome Statements	Advanced (5) Intentional and Effective Application	Transition (4)	Inter-mediate (3) Apply the concept somewhat	Transition (2)	Novice (1) Awareness or Base Level Knowledge	Mean (sd) n=6
Listening	Always attentive to others when they speak, and is not distracted	Frequently attentive to others when they speak, and rarely distract others' listening.	Occasionally inattentive to others when they speak; distract others' listening.	Primarily inattentive to others when they speak; distract others' listening.	Consistently inattentive to others when they speak for a wide variety of reasons.	
Before	17%	50%	17%	17%	--	3.67 (1.03)
After	50%	50%	--	--	--	4.50 (.55)
Context	Fully aware of mentee(s) needs: Changes language, demeanor, and delivery to best match the mentee(s).	Aware of different needs of mentee(s) and frequently changes language, demeanor, and delivery to best match mentee(s).	Aware of different needs of mentee(s) but makes little effort to change language, demeanor, and delivery.	Sometimes aware of different needs of mentee(s) but no changes in language, demeanor, and delivery.	Unaware of the needs of mentee(s) and makes no changes in language, demeanor, and delivery.	
Before	--	67%	33%	--	--	3.67 (.52)
After	17%	83%	--	--	--	4.17 (.41)
Empathy	Frequently puts self in others' shoes; accepts and understands the feelings and motivations of others; takes steps to deepen understanding	Sometimes puts self in others' shoes; sometimes accepts and understands the feelings and motivations of others.	Accepts others' feelings; does not understand others' motivations and shows little interest in seeking to understand others	Sometimes finds it difficult to accept others' feelings; does not understand others' motivations; little interest in others	Frequently finds it difficult to accept others' feelings; does not understand others' motivations and shows no or little interest in others.	
Before	33%	17%	50%	--	--	3.83 (.98)
After	33%	50%	17%	--	--	4.17 (.75)
Information Seeking	Asks questions when mentee(s) do not seem to understand what is being said; questions are consistently pertinent to main ideas.	Asks questions when mentees(s) do not seem to understand what is being said; most questions are pertinent and allow the mentee(s) to effectively communicate main ideas	Asks questions when mentees(s) do not seem to understand what is being said; few questions are not pertinent and do not allow the mentee(s) to effectively communicate main ideas	Asks questions when mentees(s) seem to not understand what is being said; most questions are not pertinent and do not allow the speaker to effectively communicate main ideas	Exhibits little or no interest in information being shared; no information seeking questions asked	
Before	--	33%	33%	17%	17%	2.83 (1.17)
After	33%	17%	50%	--	--	3.83 (.98)

Table 3: Student Self-Evaluation Ratings: Interpersonal Communication Post- Then Rubric

The Team Leads and Peer Advisors were then asked to provide responses to two questions regarding their experience with PAVE and its possible impact on their future. First they were asked about their growth in interpersonal and written communication throughout the semester. Six responded, and noted they had become more skilled in taking account of others needs during conversation and in listening to their mentee. Others commented about becoming more deliberate, concise and efficient in their written communication (emails).

Next, the Team Leads and Peer Advisors were asked to explain how their growth in communication could be applied to a professional setting after graduation, and again six replied. Comments included that the communication through email was similar to what is used in a professional setting so that experience good be applied. Becoming more skillful in using tact in communicating, and more careful when reaching out would be useful in working with employees. Others stated the practice in communicating with others in various roles (subordinates, peers, and those above them) would be useful, as well as learning to listen and not cut others off when speaking.

Demographics of Team Leads and Peer Advisors are shown in Table 4. The largest percentage of Team Leads and Peer Advisors were seniors, engineering majors, male, white, and not first generation students. Due to the small number of students, please note that one student will represent 11%.

Demographics	
Classification	
Senior	44%
Junior	33%
Sophomore	22%
College	
Engineering	56%
Agriculture	22%
Liberal Arts	11%
Education	11%
Sex	
Male	89%
Female	11%
First Generation Student	
No	56%
Yes	44%
Ethnicity	
White	56%
Hispanic or Latino of any Race	22%
Asian	11%
Black Only +2 or more/1 Black	11%

Table 4: Team Leads and Peer Mentor Demographics (n=9)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the majority of PAVE Team Leads and Peer Advisors reported that in their positions they experienced growth in their communication skills, both written and interpersonal. However, in the future, VRSC staff may want to consider including advisor evaluation along with the students' self-evaluation to provide for a direct measure of learning. Also, if continuing with a similar assessment process, the pre-assessment may want to be delivered earlier in the semester or as part of the Team Lead and Peer Advisor training.

As a High Impact Practice within the Division of Student Affairs, participation in PAVE is to include a reflection activity, and assessment of that activity. The Team Leads and Peer Advisors answered the questions regarding how their experience with PAVE impacts their future, however, those responses were short and did not provide much insight into how their experience with PAVE nurtured integrative and lifelong learning. VRSC staff may want to incorporate

education and practice in reflection as part of its training of Team Lead and Peer Advisors, as well as review the type of reflective activity to best engage in with these students. For resources on assisting these students in developing skills in reflection, VRSC is encouraged to contact the DSA Committee on Student Learning and the Student Learning Manager within Student Life Studies.

The VRSC is encouraged to share this report and its results with stakeholders with VRSC, including the PAVE Team Leads and Peer Advisors themselves, as well as with others in the Division of Student Affairs interested in the learning experiences of PAVE Team Leads and Peer Advisors.