

GLBT Mentorship Program
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center
Offices of the Dean of Student Life
Spring 2017

Background

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center (GLBT Resource Center) has been part of the Offices of the Dean of Student Life since September 2007. The mission for the GLBT Resource Center, according to its website (<http://studentlife.tamu.edu/glbt>), is:

The GLBT Resource Center serves as a resource and referral center for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Aggies and their straight supporters. The Center educates all campus and community constituencies on GLBT issues through programming about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, advocacy, leadership, and visibility. The GLBT Resource Center also collaborates with student organizations, campus departments, and local community organizations to provide students with access to resources, activities, and support services.

The GLBT Resource Center Mentorship program offers support and guidance to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning students (LGBTQ) within Texas A&M University. In 2016, this program was awarded a Division of Student Affairs College Completion Grant, intending to sharpen its focus on retention, persistence, and graduation of students involved in the program. By connecting these students with a mentor who is like them, the Mentorship program proposes that its student participants will gain efficacy in persisting to graduation at Texas A&M University. The program outcomes were as follows:

- Create tangible support systems for students through interactions with faculty and staff in a mentoring capacity.
- Enhance the dialogue around LGBTQ+ student support amongst faculty and staff.
- Generate a sense of community for LGBTQ+ faculty and allies.
- Of the students who participate in the mentorship program, 90% will be retained in the program from the active mentorship year to the next full academic year.

The GLBT Resource Center also developed learning outcomes for students (mentees) participating in the program during the 2016-2017 academic year. Those outcomes were:

- Mentees will be able to articulate the influence of sexual orientation and/or gender identity in their academic discipline/profession.
- Mentees will identify three SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals to help them secure their desired path (job/graduate degree program) after graduation.

Student Life Studies (SLS) and the GLBT Resource Center worked together to assess this mentorship program after its initial launch in the 2013-2014 academic year; this is the fourth time SLS has assisted assessing the program. Initially the planned assessment was a series of mentor and mentee focus groups to be held in April 2017 in effort to assess the student participants' experiences with the mentorship program related to their identity development and sense of belonging. However, recruitment for focus group participation was unsuccessful, so an electronic survey was developed and distributed instead.

Methods and Sample

The electronic survey was produced using Qualtrics®, survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The six-question survey contained three quantitative and three qualitative questions and was sent to mentors and mentees who participated in the program during the 2016-2017 academic year. The survey began distribution on May 3, 2017 and up to three reminders were sent to those who had not completed the survey before it closed May 12, 2017. Of the 98 individuals who received the assessment, 33 completed it, yielding a response rate of 34%. Responses from mentors and mentees represented 58% and 42% of the total survey responses, respectively. Furthermore, of the 49 mentees sent the survey, 14 responded, resulting in a 29% response rate from the mentees.

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

Results

Results will be 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 nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending mean order. Summary themes are contained in this report; the entire list of qualitative responses can be found in a separate document.

When asked if they would be willing to participate in the Mentorship Program again in future years, 33 responded, and 67% answered yes, 21% answered “no, not interested” and 12% answered “no, I am graduating or leaving Texas A&M.” Respondents who answered yes were asked why there were willing to participate again. Mentees who answered indicated they would participate again because they wanted to continue to build a community of LGBTQ students, faculty and staff at Texas A&M. The students also said they wanted to participate to network and interact with their mentors, learning from their experiences. The mentors who responded noted they were willing to participate again because of their positive experience with the program, commitment to supporting the LGBTQ community at Texas A&M University, and value in sharing resources and experiences with LGBTQ students on campus.

Those respondents who indicated “no, not interested” when asked if they would be willing to participate in the Mentorship program again in future years were asked to explain why they were not willing to participate again. Seven responded; mentees who responded said they were too busy, and personally did not get much out of the program. The mentors who responded just did not feel it was helpful for the student, and that activities were not provided or suggested to support their interaction with their mentee.

Next, respondents were asked to provide feedback about what the most beneficial aspect of the Mentorship program was for them. Twenty-nine responded, and about one-third were mentees. The mentees who responded indicated the resources they learned about through the program, such as clubs and organizations on campus, were most beneficial and other mentees indicated meeting mentors who were similar to them was helpful. Two mentees said they did not benefit from the program, and another found their mentor kind, but the program unstructured. About one-third of the mentors who responded indicated either not really connecting with their mentee or that the connection did not work out for them this year. Other mentors, however, mentioned they appreciated the chance to help and support LGBTQ+ students on campus, enjoyed providing guidance and demonstrating that life can turn out well despite obstacles that the mentee may face.

The mentees who responded to the survey were asked if participating in the Mentorship program had influenced how they felt as an LGBTQ person at Texas A&M. Of the 14 mentees who responded, 50% agreed, and 36% were neutral about whether the Mentorship Program had influenced how they felt. Another 7% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed with the statement and none of the mentees strongly agreed that the Mentorship Program had influenced how they felt as a LGBTQ person at Texas A&M (mean=3.29/5.0, sd=.91).

The mentors who responded to the survey were asked if participating in the Mentorship program had enhanced their feeling of community at Texas A&M as an LGBTQ person or Ally. Of the 19 mentors who responded, 37% strongly agreed, 37% agreed and 21% were neutral about the program enhancing their feeling of community at Texas A&M as an LGBTQ person or Ally. Additionally, 5% disagreed with the statement and none strongly disagreed with it (mean=4.05/5.0, sd=.91).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The majority of mentors and mentees responding indicated they would continue participating in the GLBT Mentorship program. Both mentors and mentees found the program enhanced the LGBTQ community on the Texas A&M campus. However, some of the mentors and mentees indicated they found scheduling time to meet to be a challenge and some wanted more structure to support the program. GLBT Resource Center staff may want to consider hosting more group activities or programs that would provide participants a more structured environment to meet.

Although half of the mentee respondents said the Mentorship program influenced how they felt as an LGBTQ person at Texas A&M, the learning outcomes developed for the participants were not assessed here. The GLBT Resource Center staff is encouraged to review the opportunities provided during or after programs or events targeting mentees' progress towards developing those outcomes, and create and implement assessment of those outcomes during or immediately after those programs or events. Please contact Student Life Studies if assistance is needed in developing those assessments. In addition, as one of the program outcomes was to retain 90% of the mentee participants year to year, the Center staff should also record and report the number of participants who return to the program in fall 2017.

Center Staff is encouraged to read all qualitative responses to gain a fuller understanding of the themes presented in this report. The GLBT Resource Center is also encouraged to share results throughout the department, as other areas may be able to support the program through additional programming and marketing efforts.

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Prepared on: July 5, 2017

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