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COMPASS 2 CAMPUS

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Creating the Future

Program Evaluation

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background of Program

Western Washington University's Compass 2 Campus (C2C) program was modeled after the University of Wisconsin Green Bay's Phuture Phoenix program, created by Cyndie Shepard. In 2008, Shepard moved to Bellingham, WA and was asked to implement a similar program on Western's campus. Working as a full-time volunteer, Shepard started forming the foundation of the Compass 2 Campus Program by gaining the support of nine local school districts. By the fall of 2009, Shepard had a team of volunteers, lead students, and student mentors who were ready to launch the first quarter of the program.

Description of Program

The Compass 2 Campus program trains Western Students to become mentors to local fifth grade students. After a few weeks of in-class instruction and preparation with Shepard, student mentors begin weekly visits to their assigned classrooms. Mentors are encouraged to help students with schoolwork, interact with them on the playground, and become positive role models in their lives. The hope is that through this mentorship program, children will be encouraged by their mentors to successfully complete high school and pursue higher education.

Program Goals and Objectives

- To encourage underrepresented, disadvantaged, diverse students starting in the fifth grade to complete high school and enroll in some form of post-secondary education.
- To provide mentors and role models for area youth using a service-learning model.
- To provide 5th graders an opportunity to visit and experience a University.
- To support educational achievement through tutoring.
- To increase awareness of life options after high school.
- To provide scholarships for C2C students who graduate from High School and are admitted to WWU.
- To develop teaching, communication and leadership skills among WWU student participants.
- Offer mentoring experience to WWU students as a way to give back to their community.

Background of Problem

This evaluation was designed to study two major aspects of the C2C program: both recruitment and retention of WWU student mentors.

Between 2009 and 2010, Compass 2 Campus had a 17.2% retention rate of WWU mentors returning to the program. Knowing this, we were interested in understanding what elements of the C2C experience either encouraged or discouraged mentor retention.

Another focus of our evaluation was to gain an idea of the effectiveness of recruitment efforts and overall campus awareness of the C2C program. We collected data from the general student population at Western Washington University.

II. SAMPLE, METHODS & DATA INSTRUMENTS

To meet the goals of this evaluation we used two methods to gather information.

The first method was to develop and distribute three questionnaires. One was used for recruitment information involving the general population of WWU. In hopes of studying a diverse demographic of participants, we intentionally sought out students from a variety of academic departments, in various locations on campus. This specific questionnaire inquired the participant's demographics such as: gender, year in school, and academic major, while the rest of the questionnaire solicited information on how much knowledge they

have about the program, how they heard about C2C, and knowledge of how to get involved (**Appendix A**).

The additional two questionnaires were distributed to former and current C2C mentors in order to determine possible reasons for students' lack of retention. The participants were found by utilizing our personal networks and the C2C contact list of mentors. The focus of the former mentor questionnaire was to gain an understanding of mentors' experiences in the program, opinions on aspects they found positive or negative, and why they left the program (**Appendix B**). The focus of the current mentor questionnaire was to learn more about mentors' motivations to either stay involved or choose to leave (**Appendix C**).

III. FINDINGS

RETENTION RESULTS
Former Compass 2 Campus Mentors

Though we distributed nearly 500 former member questionnaires, we only heard from 20 participants. Every respondent was female, 15% were freshman, 15% sophomores, 35% juniors, and 35% seniors. 75% of the mentors were involved for only one quarter, 15% had been there for two quarters, 5% were there for three quarters and 5% participated for four quarters.

Of these respondents, the majority – 86% – of mentors felt well supported in the program (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1

Did You Feel Supported in *Compass 2 Campus*?

■ I felt Supported   ■ I Did Not Feel Supported

16%

84%
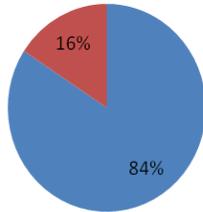
With regard to placement site teacher relationships, 79% of respondents reported these relationships as positive (**Figure 2**). This data suggests that overall program support methods and teacher relationships are not for the most part contributing factors in mentors' lack of retention.

One interesting statistic that we feel may in fact impact mentor retention is with regard to mentors' relationships with their "lead students." Only 26% of respondents reported having a positive and/or significant relationship with their lead students (**Figure 3**).

Mentors who indicated a negative relationship stated that though they tried to foster a positive relationship, they were frustrated with how little contact they were able to make with their lead students.

Mentors who had positive relationships with their lead students appreciated quick responses to emails and questions. One mentor who had a positive relationship appreciated that her lead student was "Professional and yet still welcoming for feedback and support".

Figure 2

Respondents' Relationships with Classroom Teachers

■ Positive   ■ Negative   ■ I Don't Know

11%

10%

79%

Figure 3

Respondents' Relationships with Lead Students

■ Positive   ■ Negative   ■ I Don't Know

26%

53%

21%
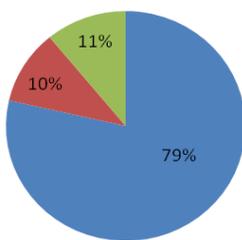
> **"The teacher was always supportive and wanted to mentor us and help us with opportunities to be creative"**
> **–former Compass 2 Campus mentor**
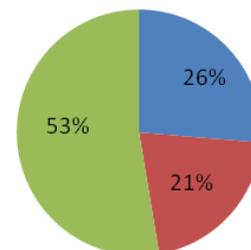
We also asked the former mentors to explain some of their least favorite aspects of C2C and/or why they chose not to continue with the program. Our main findings included:

- 30% found it difficult to afford gas for their commutes, as many of the schools were far from Western's Campus.
- 20% of the respondents were frustrated and/or concerned with the amount of academic rigor associated with the course.
- Many mentors also reported no longer having time for the program, as General University Requirements (GURs) and courses required within their majors had to take precedence.

Suggestions offered by former mentors:

"I would make [the paperwork] less tedious. When at the schools, there is a ton of paperwork to be done at the end of the day. I understand the importance of gathering information but at the end of the day when people want to leave it is hard to complete it accurately."

"I worked for one classroom in the morning and another in the afternoon. It would have been better if I could have been in the same class all day."

"Organize it better. A lot of the times I did after school stuff and the only thing they had for us to do was to organize books, and I signed up for children interaction. And getting put into the Spanish speaking club, the school was told I could speak Spanish but I couldn't, and they couldn't change the placement, so I just hung out with the kids but couldn't really talk to them."

"I would make it easier to know what kind of classroom or subject you'll be placed in when you sign up for your slot."

On a more positive note, a large majority of mentors reported feelings of satisfaction with the program and the impact they were able to make. Many enjoy the WWU tour day experience. Nearly all former mentors value building positive relationships with and witnessing the 5th grade students grow in their academic ability and self-confidence throughout the process.

Current Compass 2 Campus Mentors

Unfortunately due to the lack of response to our current mentor questionnaire – though our findings are interesting and informative – we feel we are not in a position to generalize current mentor respondents' ideas to the mentor population at large. However, it may be noteworthy that of those surveyed, the current mentors who report they will not continue in C2C also feel they will not have enough time to be involved in the future.

RECRUITMENT RESULTS
Overall Awareness of Program

Our recruitment surveys yielded fruitful results in a number of potentially beneficial ways. In general, the amount of overall awareness of the C2C program across campus is displayed in **Figure 4**, which illustrates that nearly half of Western respondents do not have any awareness of C2C.

Figure 4

Respondents' Overall Awareness of *Compass 2 Campus*

■ Got it! ■ On the right track ■ No idea
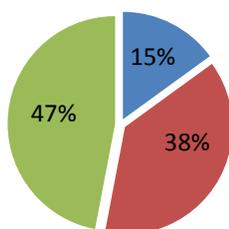
Program Awareness by Year in School

One way the recruitment surveys were particularly enlightening was in highlighting the correlation between respondents' C2C knowledge their year in school (**Figure 5**). 46% of the first year students surveyed had no knowledge of the program, compared to 69% of second year students, 29% of third year students, and surprisingly 47% of fourth year students.

Figure 5

Degree of *Compass 2 Campus* Awareness by Year in School

■ No idea ■ On the right track ■ Got it!
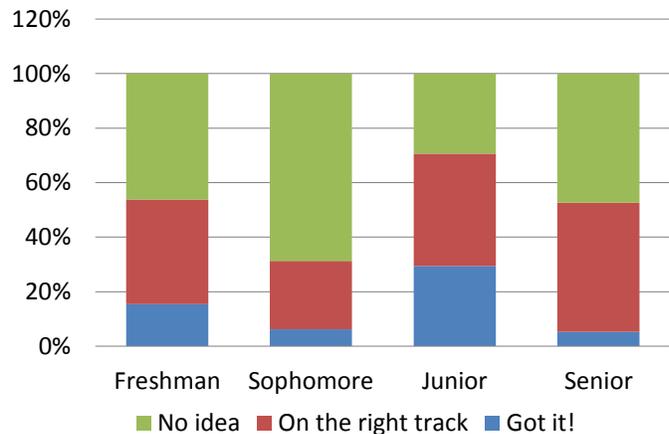
Sources of Information

The ways in which people found out about the program also varied greatly. Most respondents indicated that they heard about the program by word of mouth (friends or peers) or academic word of

mouth (in classes, via professors or advisors, etc.), 18% and 24% respectively. Only 9% of respondents found out about the program online or by email, and 12% found out via posters on campus.

In regards to students' understanding of how to get involved with the program, one third of respondents reported they would register for the C2C class online. However, half of the respondents indicated they did not know how to become involved with the program.

Program Awareness by College

Recruitment survey data was collected from 68 students on campus. There was at least one representative surveyed from each of Western's seven colleges (**Figure 6**). For the purposes of this analysis we omitted data from Fairhaven and Huxley Colleges because there were a limited amount of participants surveyed from these colleges.

Figure 6

Number of Respondents by College of Study
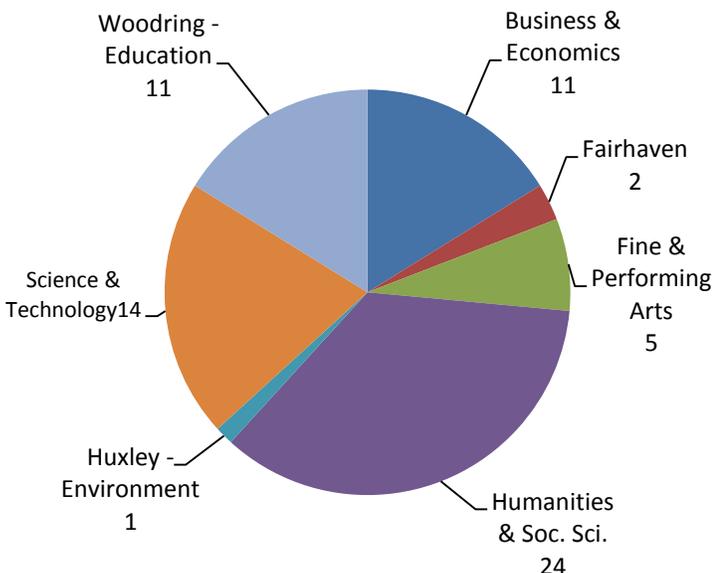
We coded the information based on the level of knowledge regarding C2C. A significant amount of knowledge was coded as "Got it," moderate knowledge of the program was coded as "On the right track," and no knowledge was coded as "No idea" (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7

Degree of *Compass 2 Campus* Awareness by College of Study
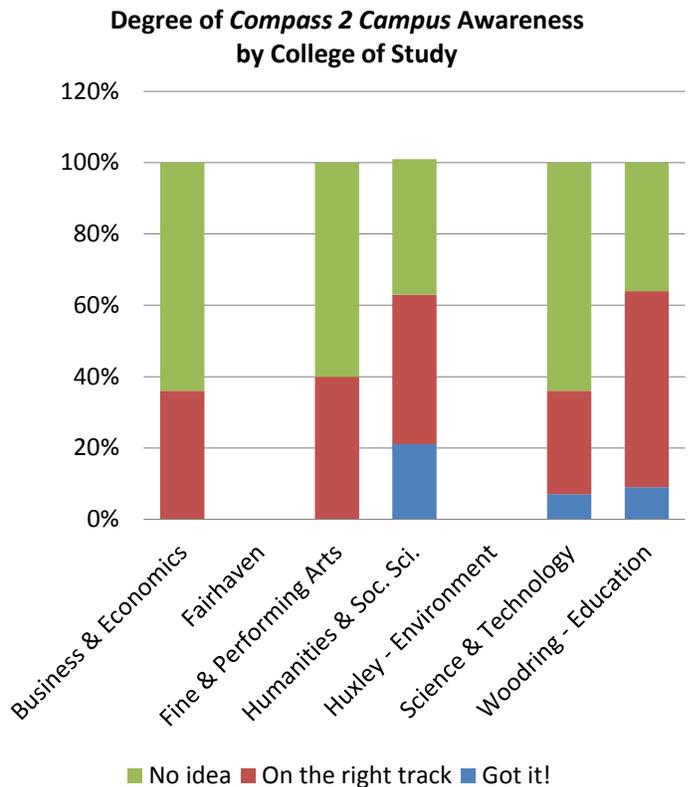
Looking at the data, we found that students in Business & Economics, Fine & Performing Arts, and Science & Technology Colleges showed the least amount of awareness of the C2C program. Well over half of the students from each of these three colleges had no awareness of C2C.

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Woodring and Humanities colleges had the greatest majority of students "On the right track" regarding their knowledge and awareness of C2C.

Students in Humanities & Social Sciences showed the greatest awareness of C2C compared to all other colleges. 21% of Humanities & Social Sciences students were fully aware of the program, followed by 9% of Woodring students, and 7% of Science & Technology students. Collectively, students surveyed from the Business and Art Colleges were unaware of the C2C program.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful analysis and triangulation of data, we were able to identify aspects of recruitment and retention that could use refinement.

Retention

Given the responses to former C2C member surveys, it was clear that a majority of former mentors either had no relationship or a negative relationship with their lead student(s). A number of respondents mentioned finding it difficult to contact their lead students and/or receive helpful responses to their questions and concerns.

Further efforts could be made to determine the ways lead students interact with mentors. A suggestion to overcome this challenge, holding both the mentor and lead student accountable, would be biweekly surveys completed by mentors

regarding their interactions with lead students. These short responses could shed light on existing challenges within each relationship earlier in the quarter. (See **Appendix D**)

Recruitment

Few respondents indicated they found out about the program from either online, email, or posters on campus. The majority of respondents heard about the program through word of mouth (friends or peers) and academic word of mouth (via professors and/or advisors). This suggests that these strategies may yield the best results.

Perhaps reevaluating advertising strategies to include more information about the process of getting involved in C2C may increase the effectiveness of these recruitment tools. One way to go about this may be to increase the amount of student outreach efforts, sending teams to speak to individual classes or setting up informational booths around campus (i.e. Vendor's Row) during recruitment phases.

More specifically, due to the large variation in levels of C2C awareness across academic departments, recruitment strategies may need to be altered to reach certain populations. A more concerted effort would be of value in the Business & Economics and Fine & Performing Arts Colleges.

V. LIMITATIONS OF EVALUATION PROCESS

As with any data collection process, this evaluation was not without certain limitations or barriers.

We were hoping to involve a statistically significant number of current C2C mentors during this process. Because we had so few current mentor participants, we were unable to generalize results to the greater population of current mentors. Information regarding mentors' plans to continue or leave the program was limited to individuals who had already left C2C. Gathering a broader range of information may have given us a better understanding of what factors contribute to mentor retention.

One of our main goals was to conduct a focus group to gain more personal insight from the mentors in the program; however it proved difficult to recruit participants. Therefore, we were not able to complete this part of the study.

Potentially, with more data or a more representative sample of students and mentors, we may have been able to provide more extensive findings and recommendations.

VI. CONCLUSION

C2C aims to inspire and motivate youth in Whatcom County's Title 1 schools to graduate high school and pursue higher education. The program gives hope to students who may otherwise have lost faith in their ability to attend college. By utilizing mentorship through partnerships with current Western students, the program provides ongoing support by way of consistent and healthy role models. Our research and subsequent evaluation of this program has shed light on both strengths of the program and areas for improvement.

By surveying a diverse group of students previously uninvolved with C2C, we were able to draw interesting conclusions regarding recruitment of potential mentors. After analyzing the data we have concluded that in general, on Western's campus, there is an underwhelming amount of awareness regarding the C2C mentor program. One suggestion to combat this issue is to reevaluate the strategies used to reach individuals from the various colleges on the campus. Additionally, in order to make the program more visible to students on campus we suggest perhaps frequenting a booth on vendor's row during recruitment phases, or even to include a quarterly progress report in the Western Front that details the program's success and includes recruitment information.

The other piece of our research was to distribute questionnaires to former mentors of the program. The most important

findings from the former mentor questionnaires were: 1) very few mentors reported having a significant or positive relationship with their lead student, and 2) a vast majority of the respondents indicated they no longer had time in their schedules to participate in the program. One suggestion that may help overcome the challenge of retaining mentors in the program is to increase incentives for mentors to stay involved – perhaps by awarding more credits, GUR credit and/or upper division credits to students enrolled in EDUC 297 A and B courses.

Though we have highlighted potential areas of improvement, it is clear that the Compass 2 Campus program has built a solid foundation on which to maintain a thriving and impactful program.

Appendix A

Recruitment questions: *[split up and administer to people in different buildings across campus]*

- What year are you in school? _____

- What is your academic major/program? (If you have not yet declared, what is your primary academic interest?): _____

- Gender: _____

- Racial/Ethnic Identification: _____

1. What do you know about WWU's Compass 2 Campus program?

2. Where did you hear about Compass 2 Campus?

3. How would you go about getting involved with Compass 2 Campus?

Thanks so much for your participation!

Former C2C member: Interview Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability; your honesty is much appreciated:

1. Gender?

2. What is your class standing? (What year in school? Freshman/Sophomore/etc.)

3. What is your major?

4. How did you learn or hear about the C2C program?

5. When did you get involved in C2C?

6. How long were you a member in C2C?

7. Did you feel supported as a mentor in the program? How so?

8. How would you describe your relationship w/ teachers at your placement site?

   - If positive, why?
   - If negative, why and what would you have done to make it better?

9. How would you describe your relationship with your lead student?

   - If positive, why?

   - If negative, why and what would you have done to make it better?

10. What was your least favorite aspect of the C2C program?

11. What was your favorite part of C2C?

12. What would you change about the C2C program if you could?

13. Please explain why you left the program:

Thanks so much for your participation!

Current C2C member: Interview Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability; your honesty is much appreciated:

1. Gender?

2. What is your class standing? (What year in school? Freshman/Sophomore/etc.)

3. What is your major?

4. How did you learn or hear about the C2C program?

5. When did you get involved in C2C?

6. Have you been in C2C for more than one quarter?

7. Are you planning on continuing in the C2C program? (Y/N)

    - Please explain why or why not:

Thanks so much for your participation!

Biweekly survey to be completed by current mentors

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability; your honesty is much appreciated:

Name of your lead student: _____

1. Has there been effective communication between you and your lead student in the past two weeks? Please explain why or why not:

2. Do you feel that you can rely on your lead student to answer your questions and concerns? Please explain why or why not:

3. What would make your relationship with your lead student more positive, if anything?