Renison Peer Leader Program Report

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1. **Introduction**

Undergraduate students at the University of Waterloo usually feel stressful because of the very competitive culture on campus (Pan, 2018). However, it is important for students to maintain good mental health, which can help students become successful in the future. They need to find someone to talk to so that they can improve their performance at the University of Waterloo. This report has been written in response to a request by The Renison University College for advice on establishing a peer-mentorship group for the English for Multilingual Speakers (EMLS) unit.

1. **Driving Forces**

The University of Waterloo wants to provide students with a healthy and balanced life. However, due to the pressure from academic study and co-op program, the student always feel stressed. At the same time, the counselling services at UW cannot meet the undergraduate students’ requirements (Lam, 2018). Students eagerly desire a peer-mentorship program so that they can release their stress, and here are three reasons:

* + - 1. Healthy mental status can help students become successful in their study and their life.
      2. It’s difficult for every student to get counselling servers. Currently, there are 37 counsellors on campus, while more than 30 thousand undergraduate students are studying at the University of Waterloo (Monteiro, 2018).
      3. The breaking news of that the University of Waterloo student died by suicide (Monteiro, 2018), resulting from the high-stress level, will affect the admission of the University of Waterloo.

In order to solve the problems mentioned above, The Renison University College is motivated to create a peer-mentorship group to improve the mental health of students.

1. **Description**

At present, the counselling services at UW cannot meet the undergraduate students’ requirements (Lam, 2018). First of All, the counsellors do not represent the diversity of students (Lam, 2018). Students at the University of Waterloo come from different cultures with different backgrounds. The counsellors may not understand what each student is thinking about. Secondly, counsellors may not be able to understand the true desire of students. Counsellors are those people who are working at a full-time job, while students are working for their academic and career achievement. It’s possible for the counsellors to not think in the way of students. Lastly, more than 30 thousand undergraduate students are studying at the University of Waterloo (Monteiro, 2018), which means counsellors cannot provide services to all the undergraduate students because of the population. Over all, the current counselling services at the University of Waterloo is problematic and can hardly reduce the undergraduate students’ stress level.

Renison can learn from The BASE Peer Leader program at Renison University College which provides social and academic help to students in the Bridge to Academic Success in English (BASE) (“BASE Peer Leaders,” n.d.). The BASE Peer Leader program hire senior students to fill the role of Peer Leaders, and Peer Leaders will hold events and schedule meeting with all the BASE students. There are three benefits. Firstly, compared with hiring counsellors with all kind of backgrounds, it is easier to find a senior student and a junior student who share a similar background. Besides, BASE Peer Leaders are senior undergraduate students who can understand the suffering of junior students. Also, there are lots of Senior students who can fill the role of peer leaders. In conclusion, the idea of BASE Peer Leader Program can be borrowed by the Renison University College to solve the mental health issue.

1. **Recommendations:** 
   1. The EMLS instructors can set up the Renison Peer Leader program and make promotion to senior students and junior students so that they can know and join this program.
   2. The EMLS instructors should select those senior students who are willing to make friend with junior students and have enough free time as peer leaders.
   3. The EMLS instructors should work together with Peer Leaders to arrange some events for junior students so that they can know each other quickly.
   4. Let the Peer Leaders and junior students with similar background get matched with each other and let them schedule a time to have individual communication with each other.

References

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