

EWU Career Services Peer Mentor Program: Feasibility Report

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Abstract

The purpose of this report is to determine the feasibility of adding a peer mentor program to Career Services at Eastern Washington University (EWU). After analyzing the data from our research, we claim that Career Services can implement the program successfully. Our research methodology included looking at secondary sources; interviewing other universities with similar programs; surveying EWU students; and interviewing career advisers at Career Services. The results from our research showed that both Western Washington University and Central Washington University have successful programs of their own. The results also showed that most students were comfortable with the idea of a peer mentor assisting them and most students were likely to utilize a peer mentor program. Lastly, our results from interviewing Ryan Weldon gave us a better understanding of current procedures and how a peer mentor program could help improve customer service. With this analysis in mind, we recommend that a peer mentor program be added to Career Services. The peer mentor program will benefit career advisors by allowing them to focus more on tasks requiring their expertise, and it will benefit students by giving them more opportunities to utilize Career Services.

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Introduction

In April, 2018, Ryan Weldon of Career Services spoke to our Writing for the Professions class (TCOM 300) and requested researching the possibility of creating a peer mentor program for Career Services. Our team decided to use his request for the basis of our feasibility project. The purpose of this report is to determine if a peer mentor program would be a good fit for Career Services at Eastern Washington University (EWU).

As currently staffed, Career Services has five career advisors to assist the entire EWU student population. As a result, career advisors have had difficulties handling the demands of office appointments and also educating students of the mission of Career Services. We agree with Ryan Weldon that adding a peer mentor program to Career Services would help make Career Services operate more efficiently.

To determine the feasibility of a peer mentor program, we researched Career Services, universities with peer mentor programs, and opinions of fellow EWU students. At Career Services, we interviewed Ryan Weldon which helped us to understand the current state of Career Services and the potential benefits of a peer mentor program. When looking for other universities with peer mentor programs, we found that both Western Washington University and Central Washington University had established peer mentor programs. The directors of these programs provided us valuable information on proven methods and best practices. To research the opinions of fellow EWU students towards a possible peer mentor program, we analyzed data from our online survey.

After analyzing our research, we recommend that Career Services adopt a peer mentor program. To help explain our reasoning behind our recommendation, the report is divided into five sections: Methodology, Results, Discussion of Results, Recommendations and Conclusion.

Methodology

This section addresses the methods our team took to gather data about how peer mentor programs could help the EWU Career Services advisors.

Gather Existing Data

To learn more about peer mentor programs and to collect secondary research, we searched for articles in the JFK Library on Eastern Washington University's campus. One of the articles we found was titled, "The Power of Peer Mentoring", by Audrey Murrell, that helped us gain a better perspective why peer mentoring helps students on campus.

Meeting with Ryan Weldon

To gain a better understanding of the current situation of EWU Career Services, we made an appointment and talked to Weldon about how a peer mentor program would benefit Career Services. Before meeting with Weldon, we typed questions that would provide important background information about Career Services. At the appointment, we asked the questions while Weldon gave answers including the number of students that came into Career Services this year. While Weldon answered, we typed the answers on the pre-written document with the questions. These questions can be found in Appendix A.

Research of Other Schools with Peer Mentors

Our team researched other schools like EWU that have implemented peer mentor programs into their Career Services.

We searched through various schools' websites to find out as much as possible about how they run their programs. We did a Google search for "Career Services (student OR peer ambassadors)" with the results narrowed by ".edu" site domains. This brought up numerous higher education institutions' Career Service pages. Our team member, MacKenzie Saladin, sorted through the schools looking for some with peer mentors that also had similar demographics to EWU. Ryan Weldon, when introducing this project, made note that demographics was important when looking at other schools because EWU has an untraditional student population.

Saladin found that Western Washington University (WWU) and Central Washington University (CWU) had peer mentor programs in their Career Services office. We decided these would be good schools to look at more closely because they are in Washington and have similar sized student bodies. Our team used their websites to gain as much information as possible about their peer mentor programs. We looked for the services their peer mentors offer, if they have information on how to become a peer mentor, and an advisor to contact that oversees the program.

After finding schools that have peer mentor program, we reached out to WWU and CWU Career Services through email about how they started their programs, how it benefited the program and how they got the students at their schools to utilize the program. Saladin reached out to Kyoko Cleveland, the Peer Advisor Program Coordinator at CWU, and the WWU Career Service office with a list of questions our team wanted to know about their program. See Appendix B for the full list of questions asked.

Conduct a Survey

Our team and Weldon's main concern about incorporating a peer mentor program was whether EWU students would want and utilize a peer mentor program at Eastern. To determine this, we created an online survey to assess what services students already used at EWU Career Services, what they would feel comfortable receiving from a peer mentor, and if they would utilize a peer mentor program. We decided to use Google Forms because this online survey distributor allowed us to have more than ten questions and still transfer the data into an Excel document. We needed to conduct this survey because, regardless of research saying peer mentor programs are beneficial, we need to know if it would be beneficial to EWU. This program will be utilized by EWU students, therefore making sure they would be comfortable and interested in the program is imperative.

The questions we asked in the survey consisted on some background questions about the person participating in the survey. These were asked so that our team could look at any trends between ages/academic standing and the answers they gave regarding EWU Career Services. We asked questions related to the services used most by EWU students and what services EWU students would be comfortable receiving from a peer mentor. All of the questions asked can be found in Appendix C.

Results

This section addresses the results from our research that will help provide information why a peer mentor program will benefit EWU Career Services advisors.

Results of Article

The article, "The Power of Peer Mentoring," by Audrey Murrell describes how peer mentoring can be beneficial for students who are the peer mentors and the students going to their services. While making these connections, peer mentors can continue to offer networking and job opportunities for students after they're finished with their college career. "Peer mentors who help these students additionally are taught leadership skills and learn about the organization they're working for that can benefit them in future job roles. (Murrell, 2018). From this article, it can be accepted that a peer mentor program is beneficial for students but with the concept of peer mentoring not being well known.

Results from Meeting with Ryan Weldon

The meeting with Weldon was beneficial for our group and gave us a better understanding why a peer mentor program can help the current career advisors.

From the meeting with Weldon, the total amount of students that have gone into career services added up to 1,436 students, where most appointments consisted of resume help. A follow up

question included when these students came into the offices, this led to the results of 634 students in the Fall, 519 students in the Winter, and 283 students in the Spring, thus far. This is due to the job fairs that are provided in the Fall and Winter, while Spring's influx is due to the large number of students graduating. The largest amount of students that use their services are seniors, while the least are graduates, but Weldon states this is due to the small population of graduates. Based on the general statistics from career services, there are about 13,000 students who attend EWU, four advisors, one associate director, and one internship coordinator that works at EWU Career Services.

The next few questions included what the career advisors expect from the peer mentors and the program. According to Weldon, all the career advisors are in support of the program and expect the peer mentors to do simple tasks such as advising how to make a resume or help students search for jobs. He added that the ideal number of peer mentors should be about 4-8 individuals working 10 hours a week to help the career advisors. The number of hours a peer mentor needs to work is important because it corresponds with the budget that career services is provided at the beginning of the year. Weldon commented how each office on campus is given a budget that they would need to use throughout the year, which effects how long and how many peer mentors could be hired.

When asked what types of students they prefer to hire for the peer mentor position, Weldon stated career services would hire work-study students rather than non-work study students. As stated before, it's important to know if career services could hire non-work study students because they would be paid by the office's budget rather than through financial aid for work-study students. Then Weldon was asked why EWU Career Services want a peer mentor program implemented, which he answered to help provide more services for more people on campus. The preferred duties career services would like their peer mentors to have include assisting the office with small tasks such as presenting information to EWU classes about Career Services, helping students look for jobs, and creating resumes or cover letters.

Results of Researching Other Schools with Peer Mentors

From our online research on schools, we found that schools ranging from state universities to tech schools to private universities have a form of a peer mentor program. We narrowed in on WWU and CWU's websites, because they are located in Washington and their similar school size to EWU.

We found that CWU Career Services use their peer mentors to provide help with resumes and cover letters, interview skills, and choosing a major. They currently have three peer mentors, two of which are juniors and one is a sophomore. CWU Career Services has drop in hours for their

peer mentors. As seen in Figure 1, they offer services from their peer mentors four days a week at two locations on campus.

**Schedules have not yet been set for Spring 2018.
Please check back here after the start of the quarter.**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Boullion 206	3-5pm	3-5pm	1-3pm	3-5pm	NONE
Library ARC	11am - 1pm	NONE	11am - 1pm	NONE	NONE

****All drop-ins are subject to change without notice. Drop-ins will not be available on the following dates: March 12-30, April 26, May 28, June 4-8.**

Table 1: The drop-in Peer Mentor schedule for Central Washington University
(CWU Career Services, <https://www.cwu.edu/career/dropins>)

Their informational page about their peer mentors includes a list of requirements of what it takes to be a peer mentor. Some of the requirements include an academic year commitment of 2-10 hours a week, a minimum of a 3.0 GPA, that work study is preferable and that any major is accepted but they prefer Social Work, Psychology, Business, or Education majors. On this page there was also a note that an internship option is available. The CWU Career Services Peer Advisor Program Coordinator's contact information was listed on this page as well.

WWU Career Services website had information about their peer mentor program as well. We discovered that the peer mentors offer office tours, demonstrate how to utilize Career Services databases, and give resume feedback. WWU students can schedule appointments with peer mentors by calling the WWU Career Services. From their website, we found that WWU Career Services has five peer mentors. Of the five peer mentors, two are seniors, one is a junior, and two are sophomores. We decided to look for ways to contact someone about the peer mentors at WWU so we could ask them questions specific about their program. From their website we found that the only form of contact is by emailing WWU Career Services through their general email.

Our team emailed WWU Career Services and Kyoko Cleveland of CWU Career Services. only heard back from Kyoko Cleveland. She provided us with their official job posting for the peer mentors. This revealed to us that their peer mentors get trained during the fall quarter, with the "expectation to be semi-independent in winter quarter" (Cleveland). The new peer mentors sit in with the counselors, in the fall, to learn how to help a student with resume/cover letter/interviewing skills. They are asked to draft resumes and cover letters and complete mock

interviews to assess their skills and ability to help other students. After their training in the fall, CWU peer mentors are responsible for co-facilitating workshops and/or designing their own workshop. They also help the career advisors as needed, attend meetings, work the front desk, and help hire replacement peer mentors.

Cleveland provided our team with information on the benefits of having peer mentors in their office. She stated that the peer mentors can assist most of the students that come into their office for class assignments. Peer mentors allow the career advisors to focus on students looking for help with resumes/cover letters and interviews for real jobs/internships. Cleveland also noted that the peer mentors are a good connection to various groups on campus because they are already directly involved with them.

Results of Online Survey

34 EWU students responded to our online survey. Of those, seven were sophomores, 18 were juniors, and eight were seniors. Data from one student was removed, because they were below the minimum age requirement to participate.

From the results, we found that, out of 33 students, 85% of them had heard of Career Services before and 55% of them had utilized Career Services before. Of the 19 students that had utilized Career Services before, the most common services requested were searching jobs and internships (47%); exploring careers and majors (53%); and writing resumes and cover letters (42%) (see Figure 1).

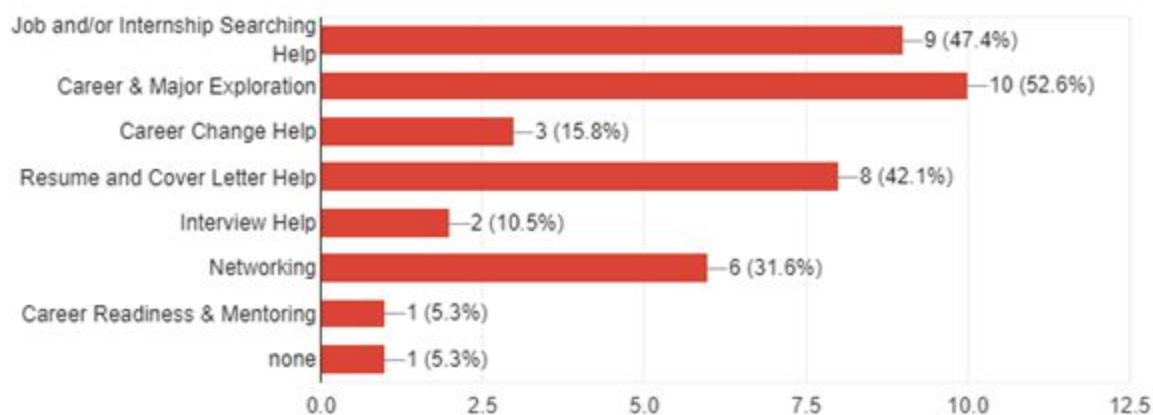


Figure 1: Summary data generated from online survey.

In the survey we asked seven questions with a 4-point Likert scale that ranked the comfort of the student with having a peer mentor assist them with various tasks. The choices were *very*

uncomfortable, uncomfortable, comfortable or very comfortable. From the data, we found that most students consistently felt either *comfortable* or *very comfortable* for all seven questions (see Figure 2).

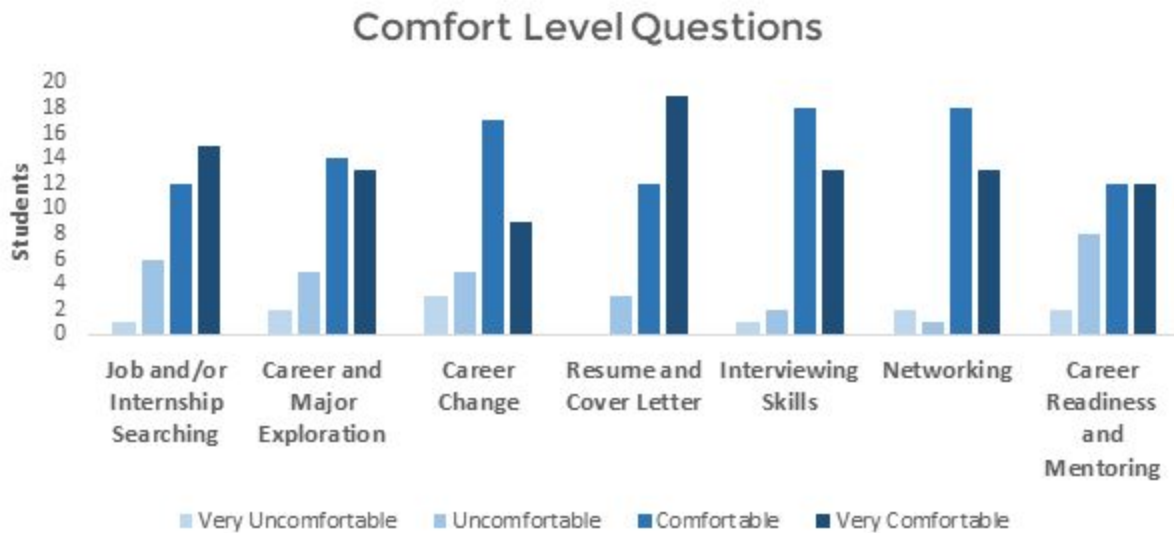


Figure 2: Data analysis comparing responses for all seven comfort level questions.

We also used the same 4-point Likert scale to determine the likelihood that students would utilize a peer mentor program at Career Services. The choices were *very unlikely*, *unlikely*, *likely* and *very likely*. From this one question, most of the students chose that they would be likely to utilize a peer mentor program (see Figure 3). The percentages were 15% for *very unlikely*, 15% for *unlikely*, 43% for *likely* and 27% for *very likely*.

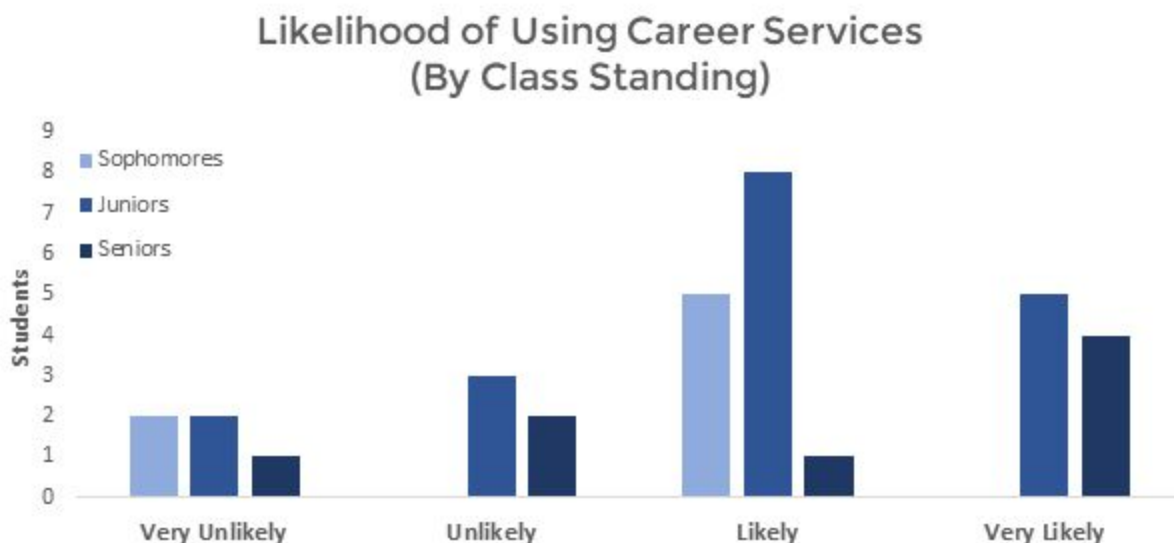


Figure 3: Data analysis Comparing likelihood of using Career Services

Next, we asked students what their preference would be when meeting with a peer mentor. The choices were *one-on-one*, *small group* (2-4 other students) or *both*. The results showed that most students chose *one-on-one* (see Figure 4). The percentages were 58% for *one-on-one*, 12% for *small group* and 30% for *both*.

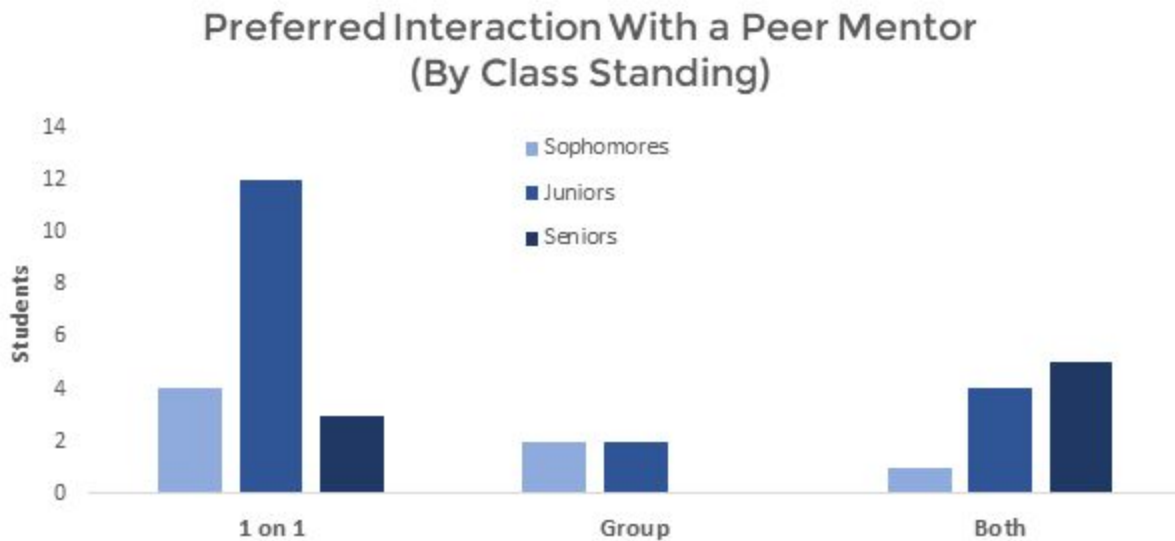


Figure 4: Data analysis comparing preferred interaction with a peer mentor.

Lastly, we asked students if they would be interested in becoming a peer mentor. The choices were *yes*, *no* or *maybe*. The data showed that most students chose *no* (see Figure 5). The percentages were 18% for *yes*, 46% for *no* and 36% for *maybe*.

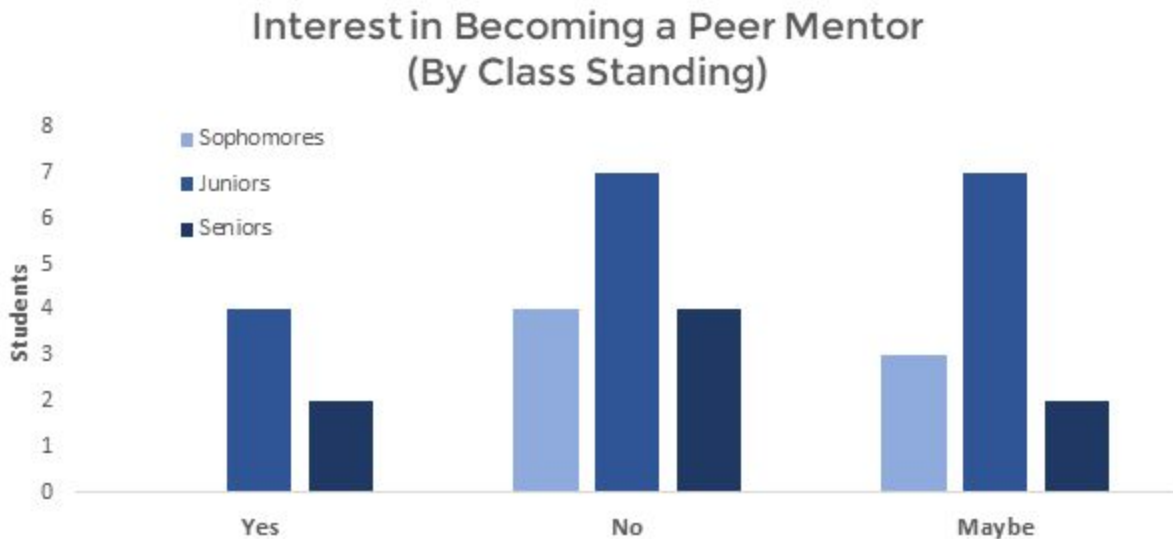


Figure 5: Data analysis comparing interest in becoming a peer mentor.

Discussion of Results

This section addresses why the collected results support an implementation of a peer mentor program for the EWU Career Services advisors.

Secondary Source

The article, “The Power of Peer Mentoring,” by Aubrey Murrell, explains the positive effects of peer mentoring to students that leads to career advisors being able to work on other tasks. If a peer mentor program is implemented, according to the article, benefits the peer mentor and the students coming into the office for help. Peer mentors will have the same skill set to a career advisor because they will be trained by a career advisor on how to help students. Additionally peer mentors will be able to connect with students better because they will be fellow students that go to EWU. If career advisors have peer mentors helping them with students, they will be able to take on other difficult tasks for other students, while peer mentors can help with simple tasks for students.

Ryan Weldon and Career Services

The meeting with Weldon provided us with background information with the current situation of career services and how advisors would feel if a peer mentor program is implemented. The main problem that Weldon stated is the large ratio between the small number of career advisors and large student population. There are currently six career advisors in career services that can help students with their career needs, but a 13,000-student population body to support. This large gap

has made it hard for advisors to meet with students, who may need a longer amount of time from career advisor to help them with specific career services such as resume/cover letter help and job searching.

EWU Career Services have made it clear that they want the extra support from peer mentors to help students with their career service needs. The career advisors expect peer mentors to help with resumes, cover letters, and present information in classes to students so they are informed about career services and what they do. Additionally, peers mentor can help students find jobs off and on campus, internship searching, and interview help. An implementation of a peer mentor program will provide the career advisors more time to students who need to have more assistance. Peer mentors will be able to provide the same support as career advisors and prevent the career services to be affected by a large wave of students needing assistance all at once.

Other Schools

The information we gathered from Western Washington University and Central Washington University's website, and the information from Kyoko Cleveland of CWU Career Services provided us with a good base of understanding how peer mentor programs function in career services.

We found that Career Services gives their peer mentors smaller tasks that mostly leave the more important stuff to career advisors. The most common services peer mentors provide is resume/cover letter help and interviewing skills. These services are given to peer mentors because they can be trained in one quarter. Cleveland supports their peer mentor program because it allows career advisors to focus on getting students jobs/internships in their careers, instead of having appointments where they only do mock interviews with students. The goal of their program being to have peer mentors deal more with class assignments gives their career advisors the opportunity to focalize their assistance to the CWU student population. WWU has their students doing resume cover letter help, but mostly has them out on the campus getting students informed about career services, and helping students utilize the WWU databases that are similar to EWU Career Services Handshake. The contrast in these two schools' use of the peer mentors gave our team two different models that we worked with in determining the best model for EWU Career Services.

In thinking about EWU Career Services, our team connected Weldon's goals of having peer mentors assist in resumes/cover letter help, present information to classes, and find jobs/internships and what WWU and CWU Career Services are already using their peer mentors for to create a better understanding of how much a peer mentor could do for EWU Career Services. Ryan Weldon wants the peer mentors for EWU Career Services to provide the services of both schools combined. Keeping in mind the training process that CWU Career Services uses,

our team decided to look at our survey results to narrow down the services the peer mentors provide. If, like CWU peer mentors, they are only working four days a week between 2-10 hours a week, then having them offer that many services may overwhelm the peer mentors. WWU and CWU both have services that Weldon is interested in having peer mentors take over, but our team needed to look at what services the EWU student population would be comfortable in receiving, leading us to begin examining our survey results.

Online Survey

After analyzing the survey data, there is enough evidence to support a peer mentor program at Career Services. There were three groups of data that provided this support directly. The first was from the Likert scale *comfort* questions. The data showed across all seven questions that a significant number of students would feel either comfortable or very comfortable getting assistance from a peer mentor. The total number (from all seven questions) of students that felt comfortable was 103, and the total number (from all seven questions) of students that felt very comfortable was 94. By comparison, the total number (from all seven questions) of students that felt uncomfortable was 30, and the number (from all seven questions) of students that felt very uncomfortable was 11 (see Figure 6). When comparing the data, the clear majority (83%) of students had some degree of comfort with the idea of getting assistance from a peer mentor.

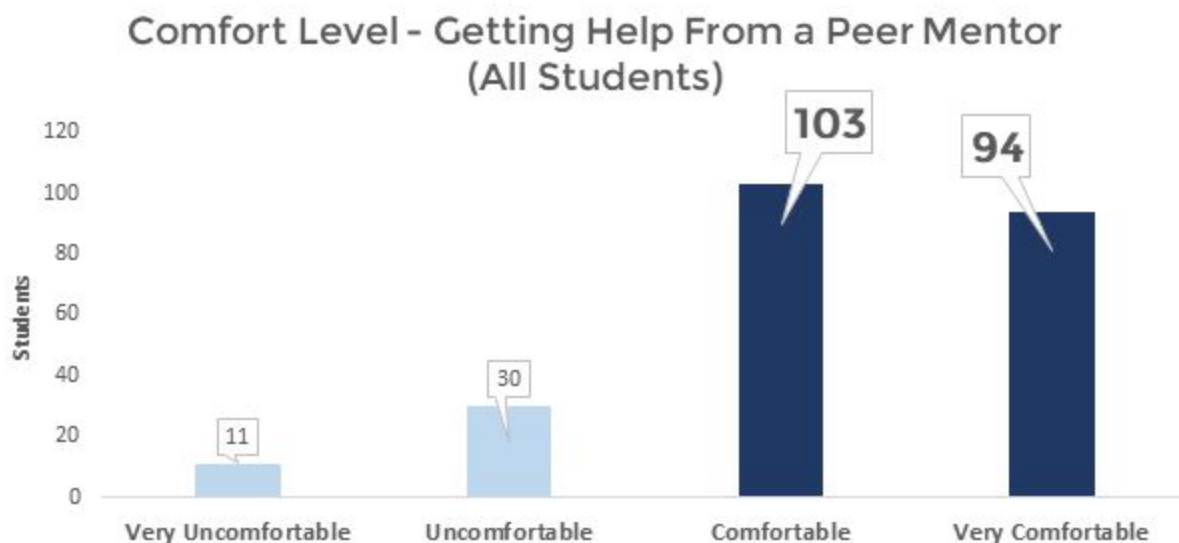


Figure 6: Data analysis showing most students have some degree of comfort with getting assistance from a peer mentor.

The Likert scale *likelihood* question also produced solid evidence in support of a peer mentor program. The data showed that a significant number of students would be either likely or very likely to utilize a peer mentor program. The total number of students that answered with *likely*

was 14, and the number of students that answered with *very likely* was 9. By comparison, the number of students that answered with *unlikely* was 5, and the number of students that answered with *very unlikely* was also 5 (see Figure 7). When comparing the data, most of the students (70%) had some likelihood of using a peer mentor program.

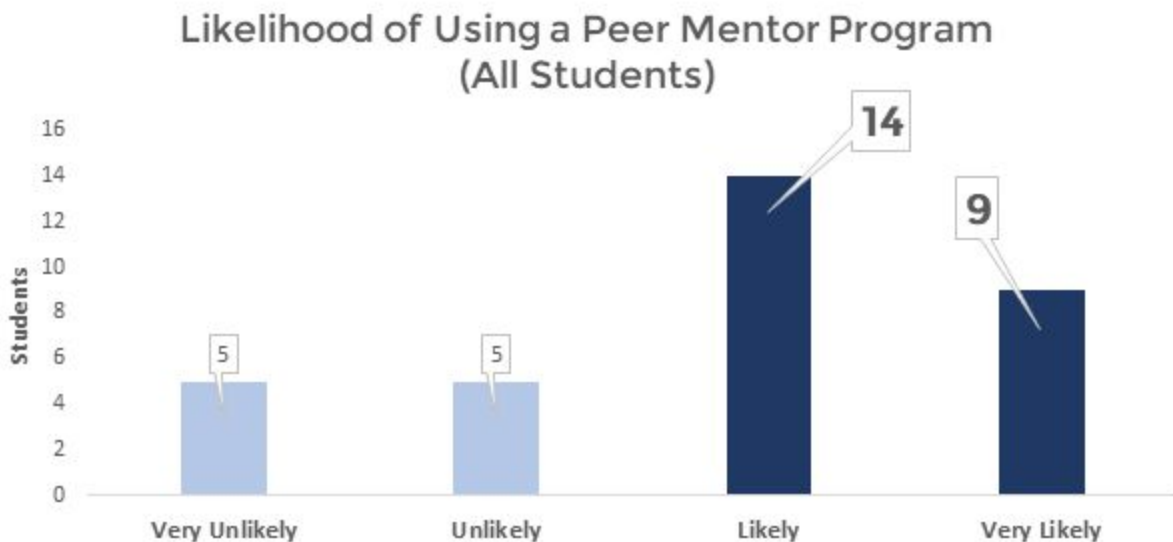


Figure 7: Data analysis showing that most students have some likelihood of using a peer mentor program.

The third data set that provided direct support for a peer mentor program was from the question asking students about their interest in becoming a peer mentor. The data showed an even split between those students who might be or would be interested and those who would not. To better analyze the data, we separated the it by class standing (sophomores, juniors, seniors). By separating the data, each data set was analyzed and used to determine if class standing has an impact. After doing this, the data showed that the group of juniors had the largest number of students that either might be or would be interested in becoming a peer mentor. The total number of juniors who might be or would be interested was 11, and the total number of them who would not be interested was 7 (see Figure 8). By comparison, the total number of sophomores who might be or would be interested was 3, and the total number of them who would not be interested was 4 (see Figure 9). For further comparison, the total number of seniors who might be or would be interested was 4, and the total number of them who would not be interested was 4 (see Figure 10). When comparing the data, the group of juniors had the most students (61%) who had some degree of interest in becoming a peer mentor. The group of seniors had the second most students (50%), and the group of sophomores had the third most (43%). This analysis supports juniors as being the most likely candidates for Career Services to hire as peer mentors.



Figure 8: Data analysis of interest of students with junior standing becoming a peer mentor.

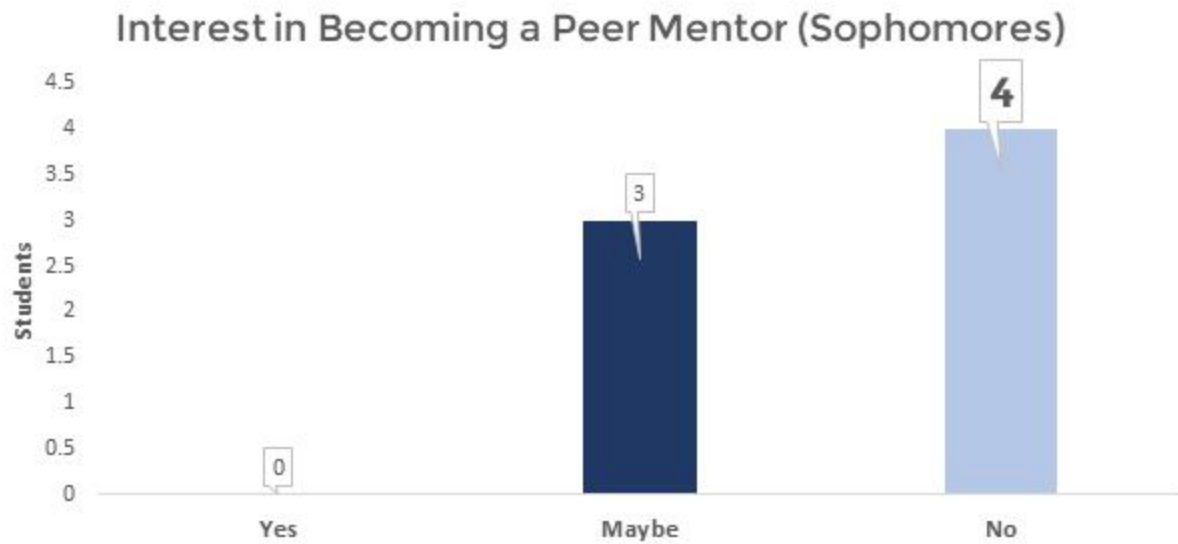


Figure 9: Data analysis of interest of students with sophomore standing becoming a peer mentor.



Figure 10: Data analysis of interest of students with senior standing becoming a peer mentor.

The last group of data provides indirect support for a peer mentor program. The analysis is intended to offer advice on what students would prefer from a peer mentor program. The data was from the question asking students which type of interaction from a peer mentor they would want. The data showed that most students wanted one-on-one assistance over small groups or both from a peer mentor. The total number of students who wanted *one-on-one* was 19. By comparison, the total number of students who wanted small groups was 4, and the total number of them who wanted both was 10 (see Figure 11). When comparing the data, most students surveyed (58%) wanted one-on-one interaction.

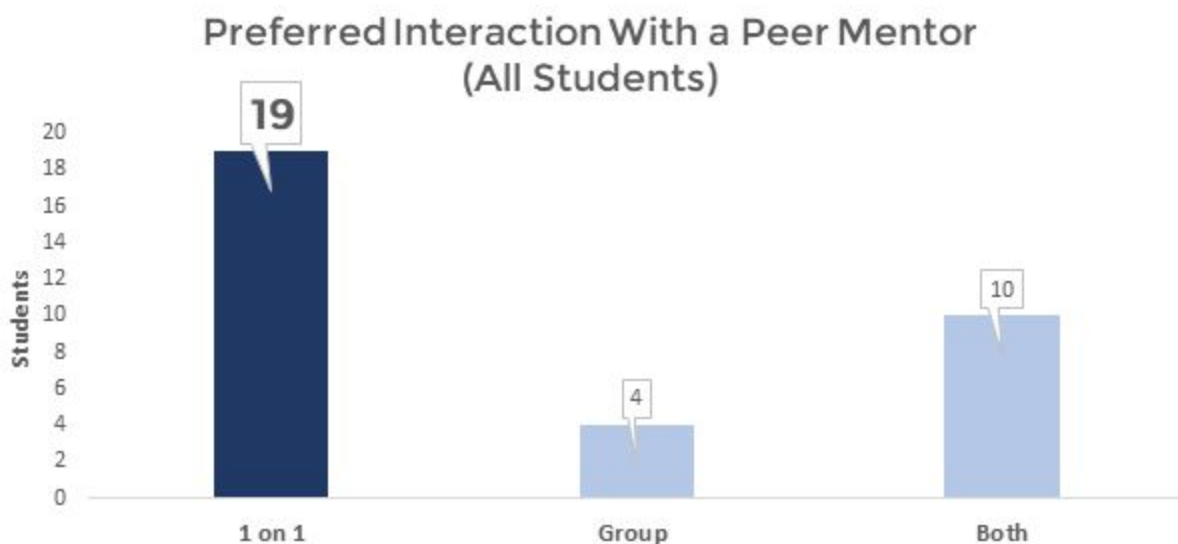


Figure 11: Data analysis showing that most of students want one-on-one interaction with a peer mentor.

Recommendation

Based on the research and data collected by the group, we found that the implementation of a peer mentor program to EWU Career Services would be beneficial to both students and the career service office. Our survey, found that students went to career services for job/internship searching, resume/cover letter help, and career exploration. These are basic tasks that peer mentors can help students with which allows the career advisors to help students with more difficult tasks. Other feedback from WWU and CWU found their peer mentor program to be helpful and enjoy the program in their own career services department.

If EWU Career Services decide to implement a peer mentor program, we recommended they hire 4-8 work-study students or have it be open as an internship position. As stated in the results from Weldon's meeting, career services has a limited budget that can make it harder to hire students from a non-work study background.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our team has determined that it is feasible to incorporate a peer mentor program into EWU Career Services. Moving forward, we would suggest doing further research on the options regarding paying peer mentors. Career Services will need to look at their budget and contact EWU Financial Aid to determine whether work study positions, paid positions, internships, or a combination would work best. Our team also suggests contacting Kyoko Cleveland of CWU Career Services to gain a better understanding on how they implemented the program into CWU Career Services. By introducing a peer mentor program, it would benefit EWU Career Services staff and the EWU student population.

We hope this feasibility report helps in the decision of whether to incorporate a peer mentor program into EWU Career Services. If you would like to discuss our findings or have any questions, please feel free to contact us through MacKenzie Saladin at her email, msaladin@eagles.ewu.edu.

References

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Bized, 17(2), 52-53.

Appendixes

Appendix A

The following questions were used for the interview with Ryan Weldon of Career Services to learn information about Career Services and what is expected from a Peer Mentor Program:

1. How many students usually come into Career Services? When is Career Services the busiest?
2. What does Career Services expect the peer mentors to do for students? Career Advisors?
3. Do other Career Advisors approve and support a peer mentor program?
4. How many peer mentors does Career Services want?
5. Does Career Services have a budget set aside for a peer mentor program?
6. What kind of students would Career Services prefer to work as peer mentors?
(Work-study, volunteers, etc.)
7. Why does Career Services want/need this program?

Appendix B

To gather information about existing peer mentor programs, these questions were the ones sent to Central Washington University and Western Washington University:

1. What steps did your office go about taking to start incorporating peer advisors?
2. What difficulties did your office face when the program first started?
3. How has the program benefited the staff in Career Services?
4. How has the program benefitted students utilizing it and those working as peer advisors?
5. Is the program utilized by your student body?
6. What steps does a student at your institution have to take to become a peer advisor?
 - a. What are the requirements your office looks for in a possible peer advisor? Why those requirements?
7. How many students does your office currently have working as a peer advisor?
 - a. Of those, how many are work study students versus paid students versus internship students?
8. Besides the services listed on your website, what other services/tasks do your peer advisors offer?

Appendix C

The following are the questions our team decided to include in our survey that was sent out to EWU students:

1. What is your age?
2. What is your class standing?
3. How many years have you attended EWU?
4. Have you heard of EWU Career Services?
 - a. If so, have you utilized their services?
 - b. If yes, please specify what services you have used. Check all that apply.
5. How would you describe your experience with EWU Career Services? i.e. adequate advisor availability, helpfulness, etc. (If not applicable, type N/A.)
6. How comfortable would you be getting Job and /or Internship Searching help from a trained peer mentor?
7. How comfortable will you be getting Career & Major Exploration help from a trained peer mentor?
8. How comfortable would you be getting Career Change help from a trained peer mentor?
9. How comfortable would you be getting Resume and Cover Letter help from a trained peer mentor?
10. How comfortable would you be getting Interview help from a trained peer mentor?
11. How comfortable would you be getting Networking help from a trained peer mentor?
12. How comfortable would you be getting Career Readiness and Mentoring help from a trained peer mentor?
13. How likely would you be to utilize a peer mentor program in Career Services?
14. Would you rather have one-on-one peer mentoring or small group mentoring with a trained peer?
15. Would you be interested in becoming a peer mentor?