Madison Smith June 4, 2018

EDUC 401 Reflection

Over the last ten weeks, I have been lucky enough to participate in this tutor-mentoring program. Throughout the quarter, I learned a lot about my mentees, studying skills, the various barriers to academic success, and about myself. I learned a lot about what contributes to academic success and realized that there is more to academic success than studying hard. This program has improved myself and hopefully my mentees and has opened my eyes to a new side of academic inequalities.

One pivotal moment that I learned from was when one of my mentees was applying for study abroad and I realized that the application process is a lot more work for her than it would have been for someone else. She had to email people about getting the application fees waived, meet with advisors to figure out how to pay for the program, and had to apply for scholarships. All of this takes up a lot of time which means she has less time to think about her school work than another person who is more economically advantaged.

I think an impact I had on one of my mentees is that I helped her develop more effective studying habits. I hope she recognizes more and less effective methods of studying and uses these to shape her future habits. I also hope that I have planted some seeds to help her recognize that she has limited time and energy and she needs to recognize these when making decisions. For my other mentee, I think that I helped him navigate some of the red tape around probation and majors. I also helped him think a bit longer term like about what probation means, how to get off of probation, and thinking about getting into a major, which I hope will help encourage him work hard to keep his grades up. I also think I helped him a bit with the resources he needs to complete reading and writing assignments.

My students had many impacts on me. For instance, I think seeing struggles from the outside helped me see unhealthy patterns in my own life. I think also seeing these struggles from the outside also helped me see how much I have grown over the last four years. I recognized a lot of patterns and habits from my own early college years which I gradually changed. My students also helped me realize the importance of community and how support can drastically impact a student academic success. I realized that school is more than working hard- there is a whole social component that contributes to it too.

Overall, our quarter went pretty well and there is not too much I would change. However, for one of my mentees, I wished I had identified that we needed to focus on identifying the priority of different tasks and how to juggle all of those tasks earlier so that we could spend more time on it. My other mentee was quiet so I wish I had found some way to get him to open up and be a bit more descriptive about what “okay” actually means.

I thought I was pretty well prepared to teach skills to my students. The papers we read for homework were useful because I definitely saw some of the things that the papers were talking about in my mentees. However, I wish we spent more time in class going over the papers and specifically how to implement them in our sessions. I also felt like class time was a bit rushed and we only got to a superficial level in many discussions.

This class has helped me understand the impact of education inequalities, the importance of resources and programs meant to support diverse student populations, and the “invisible curriculum” in the university. Before this class, I knew a bit about education inequalities and the barriers facing students. But it was not until I actually saw barriers in action that I truly understood the impact of these barriers. Additionally, this class helped me realize the importance of educational equality resources and programs. Before I took this class, I thought these programs were handy. But now I realize that these programs provide resources and a community of people who are facing the same challenges, which make a huge difference, particularly in terms of academic success. Finally, this class also helped me understand the “invisible university curriculum.” At the beginning of the quarter, I did not know what that term meant. Now I realize that having a strong relationship with people who have graduated from college and gone on to have careers significantly influences the confidence and knowledge that someone comes into college with.

I think our work this quarter influenced how I think about educational equality and what these barriers mean in the daily lives of the people who face them. Throughout this quarter inequality has become much less of an abstract term as I have seen specific examples throughout the quarter. I think through working in this program has made me more interested in working with these programs in the future. This program has also placed a new importance on equality, especially equality within the academic sphere, and making sure economically and otherwise disadvantaged students have the same academic opportunities as those more privileged students.

In the end, I learned a lot about what contributes to a successful student and the importance of these programs meant to increase equality in the academic sphere. I hope I had some sort of lasting positive influence in the lives of my mentees because I know they had a positive influence in my own life.