WELCOME to Issue 5 of the Peer Mentoring @ UNSW Newsletter!

Whilst the 2015 academic year is about to kick off, we’d like to take this opportunity to look back at the positive outcomes of 2014 and to acknowledge all the time and hard work given to the Peer Mentoring programs by the mentors and Peer Mentoring Coordinators.

Last year was a productive and successful year for Peer Mentoring @ UNSW with a total of 23 programs running across UNSW from a variety of Faculties, Departments, and Student Organisations. Approximately 878 mentors volunteered their time to support around 3553 new first year students (mentees), helping to make the transition into university as smooth as possible.

In October 2014, Peer Mentoring @ UNSW also hosted a successful and inspiring two and a half hour Showcase, themed ‘Values at Work’, presenting innovative partnerships, programs, best practices and research in Peer Mentoring at UNSW. The Showcase was well received, with attendees most appreciating the uniqueness and substance of the presentations, getting great value from learning about different peer mentoring programs.

For the first Peer Mentoring @ UNSW Newsletter for 2015, we are pleased to feature Shpressa Alikay-Thomson the Peer Mentoring Coordinator for the Faculty of Engineering. Also included is an inspiring story of a previous mentor who now works as a video producer (and more) at a Sydney based media company, and some great articles from other mentors and mentees, including a piece on the SLL Volunteer of the Year Award winner for 2014!!

We hope you enjoy reading Issue 5!!

WHERE ARE THEY NOW? From Mentor to Video Producer, Online Editor, Feature Writer and many more!

Alexandra Potter (former Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Peer Mentor)

The Peer Mentoring program gave me skills that I have been able to use in many facets of my life since leaving uni.

After completing a degree in Media (Journalism and Communications) and Politics with Honours in 2013, I have been working full time as a video producer, online editor and feature writer for a Sydney-based media company. I also co-own two businesses: - a production company that makes documentaries, and an online store that sells hand-knitted clothes. Last year, I won one of three national journalism mentoring and education awards run by ‘Kill Your Darlings’. Through this mentoring ship I completed a long form investigative article exploring incidents of alcohol-related violence. The mentorship has also put me in contact with one of Australia’s foremost contemporary journalists.

I started my time in the peer mentoring program as a mentee, then became a mentor, a senior mentor, and finally a super mentor and facilitator. The peer mentoring program taught me many valuable attributes that I still use to this day. The skills of communication, strategising and facilitation that I developed through the mentoring program helped me to build the confidence of new students, as well as my own.

Being a mentor, I was able to interact with a wide range of people with different backgrounds, interests and ideas. This created a dynamic network of engaged people to work with. From this group, I was able to make many great friends and share lots of joyful experiences. Being a peer mentor not only allowed me to give back to the university and help other students as I had been helped, it provided me with a sense of achievement, and most importantly, it was a lot of fun. The peer mentoring program is filled with many great rewards that are beneficial to the mentor and the mentee and will enrich your experiences both in and out of university.

For more information about Peer Mentoring @ UNSW please go to www.peermentoring.unsw.edu.au

PEER MENTORING TRIVIA!!

Q. Since the inception of Peer Mentoring @ UNSW in 2002, approximately how many first year students have participated as mentees in a Peer Mentoring program at UNSW?

A) 25,081?
B) 28,253?
C) 34,984?

Answer: C. Since 2002, an amazing 34,984 (approx.) mentees have transitioned into UNSW by a mentoring program supported through peer mentoring. Mentors have helped over 30,000 (approx.) mentees have helped over 30,000 students.

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THE WHO'S WHO IN PEER MENTORING @ UNSW: Shpressa Alikay-Thomson currently works for the Engineering Student Centre, which is part of the Engineering Faculty, as the Administrative Assistant.

The Engineering Student Centre assists students, who are in the Flexible First Year and Undeclared programs in Engineering, with any of their enquiries.

Shpressa has been part of the Engineering Student centre for over 6 years and become more involved with the mentoring program for the last 3 years. The mentoring program in the Engineering faculty has grown significantly over the last years with more students wanting to become mentors and new students wanting mentors. Feedback from Mentors and Mentees assists with improving the program every year to make it the best it can be.

“I try to improve the program every year so that our new students can have as much information available to them to make their transition to University a smooth one and encourage our Mentors to assist them as much as possible with passing on of any hints and tips that they would have liked to have known when they first started University. A great example of initiative by one of our Mentors was creating and providing his Mentees with a newsletter which consisted of many handy hints relating to general knowledge required for first year students.”

HEAR FROM A MENTOR: UNSW UNI-Wide Midyear Peer Mentor, Xavier Jusay

My name is Xavier Jusay and I am a Commerce (Accounting/Information Systems) student. I was a Midyear Mentor that supported new UNSW students who kicked off their studies in S2, 2014. Ultimately, my role as a mentor was to make sure that they had the same welcome as those students who started in Semester 1 and help them kick start their first few weeks of university (which can be quite a daunting task!)

Being a mentor in the UNI-Wide Midyear Peer Mentoring Program was, in a nutshell, a very rewarding experience. It required me to step back in time to when I first started university and to think about what I would’ve told my “four-years-ago” self – such as “make sure you don’t leave your homework to the last minute just because you only have the tutorials once a week!” or “grab a beanbag in the library during your long breaks”. It was really a passing on of knowledge, of what I had picked up from my time here at UNSW, on to my mentees, so that they could know about something now rather than discovering about it two years down the track. And the achievement that you feel, as a mentor, to have helped a mentee tackle their own path through university is unlike any other – a true sense of community assistance.

I hope to be able to take forward what I have developed throughout my participation in the UNI-Wide Midyear Peer Mentoring Program to my future career – the ability to communicate to others, understand their issues and concerns and to provide appropriate answers or advice. To other students looking for a way to help out, I wholeheartedly recommend becoming a mentor at UNSW. You get to meet new people, go to fun activities and events and most importantly, make a real and tangible contribution to the community around you. And all you need is your experience (food-related such as where the best places to eat on campus are and otherwise!) and the ability to talk about it with other people (through Facebook for example) who are in the same position you were in just a few years ago.

HEAR FROM A MENTEE: The benefits of joining a peer mentoring program

Ian Li, LawPlus Mentee

In the dark, tumultuous tempest that is the first weeks of university, peer mentoring was the path that guided me towards the light.

Metaphors aside, the times spent with my LawPLUS group were some of the best and most enriching experiences I’ve had so far. Friendships, subject advice, food, exploring the campus... the list goes on. What stood out the most though was the feeling of inclusion, the idea that even with their hectic schedules, older students went out of their way to help me become part of the admittedly intimidating law community. The social activities and the good times followed. Given the opportunity, I would definitely want to be a mentor to help new students find that sense of belonging. 10/10 — I would recommend!
HEAR FROM A MENTOR: Cultural Peer Mentor, Brandon Hang

My name is Brandon and last year I completed a four year degree in Commerce/Economics. I was a Cultural Mentor with Student Development International (SDI) for 2 years and really enjoyed being apart of this amazing program.

Moving to a new country is an overwhelming experience, and I have witnessed first-hand, the hardships of students who try to fit into a new environment. Being a mentor provided me with an opportunity to get to know new international students and help new students enjoy their experience at UNSW.

With the love for travelling and experiencing new cultures, being a cultural mentor was a rewarding opportunity where I had the privilege to meet amazing people from all over the world. In my engagements with new international students, I had the opportunity to embrace different cultures through talking to mentees who willingly shared their cultural experiences and stories.

Through my two-year experience as a mentor, I not only enhanced my own social skills but also helped my mentees fully integrate into the university social life and experience the amazing opportunities available.

WINNER OF THE SLL VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD—2014

Congratulations to Leah Findlay, who won the Student Life and Learning Volunteer of the Year Award for 2014.

Leah was awarded the Student Life and Learning (SLL) Volunteer of the Year Award at the SLL Volunteer Thank You event held late last year.

In S2 2014, Leah completed her final semester of her Arts/Law degree. This year she hopes to continue her studies by undertaking a PhD.

She has volunteered in multiple peer mentoring programs sponsored by the Counselling and Psychological Services [CAPS] for three years in a row, the ‘UNI-Wide Midyear Peer Mentor Program’ being the most recent. Once again, a big congratulations Leah!

WHAT’S ON AT UNSW

Whether you are a new student to UNSW or a returning student, it’s a good idea to check out the ‘Getting Started’ webpage at www.gettingstarted.unsw.edu.au.

The ‘Getting Started’ webpage has lots of useful information about what’s on in the first few weeks of semester, including activities and entertainment, workshops, official welcomes and things to do to help you get started in your first semester at UNSW.

ARC—Also, don’t forget to check out the ARC website and sign up if you are not already a member (www.arc.unsw.edu.au). ARC has lots of fun events on and a huge list of clubs and societies you can join. So get involved, meet new people, and have fun!

QUOTE:

Courage does not always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, ‘I will try again tomorrow.’

By Mary Anne Radmacher

CONTRIBUTIONS?

Would you like to share a story about your Peer Mentoring at UNSW experience or is there something that you would like us to include in the newsletter? If so, please email peermentoring@unsw.edu.au