

## **Peer to peer academic mentoring: an international consideration of shared approaches and literature**

**Kirk Skoglund**

Northwest Missouri State University, US

**Luke Millard**

Birmingham City University, UK

**Alisha Francis**

Northwest Missouri State University, US

**Luke Nagle**

Birmingham City University, UK

**Stuart Brand**

Birmingham City University, UK

### ***Abstract***

Peer-to-peer academic mentoring has the potential to contribute to retention and progression goals as programmes benefit mentors, mentees and staff. Although there are necessarily common elements, programmes that include academic mentoring vary in their focus and structure. Each programme must also be deliberately designed to address the unique character of individual institutions and their students. From programmes at two very different institutions – one in a rural town in the United States and one in a major city in the United Kingdom – the approaches to and outcomes from peer mentoring activities are considered and the literature surrounding mentoring models is discussed.

**Keywords:** academic mentoring; institutional collaboration; peer support; retention; success.

## ***Introduction***

Retention and progression is of great interest to many higher education institutions given global political and economic climates. Pressures are converging to highlight the value of effective and efficient strategies to increase progression and timely degree completion. Volumes of research informing those strategies suggest institutions can leverage student engagement to meet institutional goals while benefitting students (Astin, 1985; Tinto, 2012).

Kinzie et al. (2008) emphasise the role of the institution in cultivating engagement, including the degree to which institutions actively facilitate programmes that foster learning. The National Union of Students (2012) reports feedback from students in the UK suggesting programming will be more effective if it includes interactive sessions and individual tutorials with sufficient contact time. This feedback is consistent with findings indicating students find value in interacting with staff and peers (Crosling et al., 2008).

Increasing staff contact time creates an issue, however, when budgets are limited. Peer-based academic mentoring programmes offer some resolution without compromising the value of the interactions. Newton and Ender (2010) note 'peer educators are valuable for an academic institution because they are experienced with the campus, they are economical to the budget, they can relate to the situations of fellow students, and they are effective' (p.3).

## ***Engagement through peer academic mentoring***

Peer-to-peer academic support offers a number of benefits by fostering engagement on the part of both the mentor and mentee. Mentors are required to master course content, reinforcing understanding and contributing to skill proficiency (Falchikov, 2001; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). Many researchers (e.g. Chen and Liu, 2011; Goldschmid and Goldschmid, 1976; Newton and Ender, 2010) emphasise benefits to academic mentor confidence and self-esteem. Collectively, the benefits for mentors can be transformative (Nygaard et al., 2013).

Partnerships between teaching staff and student academic mentors can facilitate learning for all students by making the content more accessible. Students may be more likely to engage with academic mentoring because peers are less intimidating (Latino and Unite, 2012) and more relatable (Goodlad and Hirst, 1989; Newton and Ender, 2010). Peer mentors can also present material in a way that is more accessible to other students, offering a bridge between the conscious incompetence of students and the unconscious competence of teaching staff (Ambrose et al., 2010).

### ***Peer academic mentoring in practice***

Birmingham City University in the United Kingdom and Northwest Missouri State University in the United States have invested in programming to promote engagement through peer academic mentoring. A partnership between the institutions developed out of a common interest in student employment, leading to a specific focus on academic mentoring and this created a focus that centred on the exchange of ideas between the two institutions. Particular institutional challenges, however, forced representatives at both institutions to think critically about how mentoring could be effectively used in their context and about potential ramifications, impacts and benefits.

Northwest Missouri State University is a public university in a small, rural town in the United States. It serves approximately 6,000 undergraduate students and 800 graduate students with 95% of first year students living on campus and 40% of final year students living on campus. Northwest Missouri State offers 135 undergraduate programmes and 36 master's programmes. For an undergraduate degree, each student completes a liberal arts education called 'General Education' along with specific degree requirements.

Northwest introduced academic mentoring programmes in the mid-1980s, partially centralising activities taking place in academic departments prior to that time. Mentoring services are currently administered by a number of programmes, including the University's Talent Development Centre (TDC), the University Seminar Programme, and the federally-funded Student Support Services programme as well as by individual academic departments. The TDC is the largest of the mentoring initiatives, employing over 40 student mentors working with their peers 1-1 or in small groups. In 2012/2013, the TDC saw close to 2,000 individual students for almost 14,000 contact hours.

Across programmes, Northwest Missouri State University employs over 110 student academic mentors who are compensated through a student employment programme administered by the office of human resources. Selection processes and pay rates vary by programme, though all student employees are paid at or above minimum wage. Training also varies across programmes, though some departments collaborate in those endeavours.

Birmingham City University is a large metropolitan university of 24,000 students spread over eight campuses located around the city. The university offers over 300 undergraduate and post-graduate programmes and a variety of foundation courses, short courses and top-up degrees. Each programme has entry requirements pertaining to that particular degree.

In 2010 Birmingham City University developed a project-based, institution-wide mentoring initiative known as the Student Academic Mentoring Programme (StAMP). It has engaged with 158 programmes and supported 81 mentoring projects in that time. A yearly output, such as that in 2012/13, saw the StAMP programme employ 113 student mentors who worked with 2,750 mentees within 3,750 mentoring sessions across 3,600 mentoring hours. Mentor selection includes an interview process and results in payment at a rate above the UK minimum wage to show the value of this work. Students receive centralised training to support their roles, part of which stresses the need for students to act as a signpost to further services and advice, rather than to pretend they have all the answers.

Faculty at both institutions have come to recognise the merits of mentoring approaches. The argument that students are often happier to approach peers than faculty is well known and structured programmes help improve the quality of the peer response. Participating faculty note an investment of time as guidelines and practices are formulated with decreasing demands as academic mentors take ownership of the initiatives. That process of transferring ownership also results in a dynamic shift in perspective for both faculty and mentors, including changing views on the nature of the learning process (Nygaard et al., 2013).

While the two institutions have a very different history with mentoring activities the partnership between Birmingham City and Northwest Missouri State University has benefitted both institutions. As Birmingham City staff developed the StAMP program,

Northwest staff offered valuable perspectives on possible pitfalls, logistics, data collection, methods of best practice, and models of mentoring. In return, Birmingham City staff have challenged Northwest staff to look at programmes in a critical light and adopt innovative approaches to foster broader student engagement. This partnership has resulted in the exchange of ideas and best practices, whilst allowing each institution to adapt those practices to their specific institutional and cultural context. Therefore, we offer this paper, not as a shared research piece, but as an example of how two institutions can improve their peer mentoring approaches through a shared dialogue and arrive at similar conclusions.

### ***Mentoring models***

Both institutions have established a range of academic mentoring programmes in an effort to engage a broad demographic of students. Collectively, the programmes reflect Murray's definition of mentoring as:

A deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies. (Murray, 2001, p. xiii).

The programmes vary in the degree to which they focus on a particular academic subject, the location in which mentoring takes place, and the mentor-mentee ratio. These contrasts are important to note. Reducing mentoring models to a fixed set of procedures limits the likelihood programmes will adapt to suit the peculiarities of institutional context, programme or class discipline, and student demographic. As such, what follows is a review of the literature surrounding each mentoring model and particular case studies of that model at each institution. Each mentoring model will consist of the review of literature, case studies of that mentoring model at each institution and lessons learned through discourse between the two institutions. These modes are offered in the spirit of the sentiment expressed by Mandell and Herman:

Academic Mentoring cannot be reduced to a recipe, the commitment can be expressed as a set of practical principles that inform and guide behaviour and reflection. (Mandell and Herman, 2009, p. 80).

## ***Methodology and ethical considerations***

Whilst this piece is more a review of the literature, there is some data presented within each case study. This is not meant to be taken as an in-depth analysis, but more to enhance the understanding of that particular model in the institutional context. Most of the data and information from Northwest Missouri State University was collected via survey or was archival information freely available. At Northwest, the university's institutional review board reviewed the ethical considerations of using this information and found that it protected the privacy and information of any participants. Birmingham City University accessed the evaluation data from each initiative to inform this paper.

## ***Induction mentoring***

Induction mentoring helps new students transition into the university or programme by helping them recognise or build the skills that will help them become successful. Induction mentoring can include university-wide and/or course-specific programmes and can be in a large group or one-on-one.

Many students find it difficult to adjust to the different teaching styles at university (Gorard et al., 2007; Quinn et al., 2005). In addition, they frequently arrive at university without knowledge or insights of the learning process (Ambrose et al., 2010). A peer academic mentor can help the student understand what is expected from them in their course, help them locate resources, clarify requirements, assist in structuring time for independent study, and provide general advice on how to become a successful student. The goal is to assist the student in becoming an independent learner. Given that, support typically decreases over time, though the interactions between mentor and mentee can continue in a more informal capacity.

Many schools in the US have an integrated first year seminar that helps to provide orientation to the University as well as access to resources and academic skills. Cuseo (1991) suggests that the first year seminar has an impact on a student's persistence to a second year as well as a student's academic achievement. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) echo Cuseo (1991) and suggest that there is a positive and significant relationship between participation in a first year seminar and graduation and persistence. In the

induction programmes at both universities, the student mentors provide a pivotal role in helping students' transition to the university.

Northwest Missouri State University, provides a first year seminar that offers an administrative structure for induction mentoring. Northwest's seminar includes a course requirement for all students and addresses academic skills topics such as effective note taking and critical reading. Each section is facilitated by a teaching team consisting of an instructional staff member and an academic mentor – called a 'Peer Advisor.'

A survey of first year students in fall of 2013 indicated students felt their peer advisor assisted in their transition to Northwest Missouri State University. When asked if the peer advisor was a valuable asset to the course, responses averaged 4.59 on a 5 points scale where 5 was strongly agree. Similarly, when asked if their peer advisor helped create an atmosphere receptive to questions the average response was 4.65.

At Birmingham City University, StAMP provides a number of innovative examples of student centred, skills-based induction mentoring. The most notable of these is the Level Up programme in the School of Media which seeks to engage students in e-mentoring from the moment they confirm their acceptance. Incoming students receive course information and 'mini-assignments' that are meant to be fun and engaging. The intent is to encourage students to start interacting with each other and ask questions about what they can expect. Peer academic mentors facilitate online discussion and answer questions during online forums or over the phone. The Level Up programme is credited with a 7% increase (19 additional students) in the first year student retention rate in that School in its first year.

Birmingham City University also includes peer academic mentoring as part of induction activities for international students. Bilingual mentors assist in clarifying misunderstandings that can lead to a significant feeling of alienation and disengagement from the university. Overall, the StAMP programme has supported 16 induction related mentoring projects and employed 116 student mentors who have impacted upon over 1,100 first year students. On a strategic level this work, and other complementary work around student retention and success, has started to change the institution's perspective and is a key part of new plans to transform transition and the first year experience across the entire university through institution wide processes.

Evaluating the effectiveness of an induction programme can be difficult. Firstly, the outcomes of the programme such as skills or cognitive outcomes should be assessed. Some suggested methods include commercially available instruments, home-grown assessments or qualitative assessments such as focus groups or performance based assessments (Skipper, 2005). Secondly, Skipper (2005) also suggests that these outcomes based assessments are powerful when combined with other measures such as retention rates or academic success of students. It seems that a multi-faceted approach should be used when evaluating the effectiveness of an induction programme.

The following table highlights some of the lessons learned through the partnership regarding induction mentoring that could act as a guide when developing an induction programme.

**Table 1. Induction mentoring.**

<b>Particularly effective with</b>	New students to a course or programme, particularly first year students at the university.
<b>Typical delivery</b>	With a course or in a series of seminars.
<b>Focus</b>	<b><i>Content and skills:</i></b> mentors help students with skills to be successful in their programme and course <b><i>Holistic:</i></b> mentors assist students in adjusting and acclimating to university life.
<b>Potential strength</b>	<b><i>Better prepared students:</i></b> mentoring helps establish skills for success and develop a connection with the university.
<b>Potential pitfalls</b>	<b><i>Lost message:</i></b> some students are not ready to hear and embrace messages and skills. <b><i>Underutilisation:</i></b> Partnering staff members may not collaborate with mentors in a manner which utilises the programme to its full benefit.

## ***Workshop mentoring***

Workshop mentoring is held outside the class and works with students one-on-one or in a group to build particular skills that will be helpful in their programme of study. The workshop model provides opportunities for students to put content from lectures into practice, though this type of academic mentoring is not necessarily attached to a specific class and focuses on developing skills that are generalisable within a programme of study.

In a medical programme in the U.S., faculty members use workshops to teach clinical skills and students report increased confidence and desire to practice those skills (Corbett et al., 2007). In a workshop model, Summers et al. (2013) suggest students engage more readily with the workshop facilities and gain a broader experience when student mentors are running them/assisting in them. The evidence for peer-led workshop mentoring is continued in a scheme in chemistry that, while focused on chemistry content, also helped developed skills essential to the study of chemistry and produced significant results in student grades, retention, and satisfaction (Gosser and Roth, 1998).

At Birmingham City, workshop mentors frequently assist with technical skills in such diverse areas as architecture, nursing, engineering and media. Workshop mentors may collaborate with instructional staff to develop projects or workshop sessions for students, offering an opportunity to develop partnerships. StAMP has supported 17 of these projects and employed 117 students supporting over 1,200 mentees.

Five of those students are employed in the Digi-Lab project for the School of Architecture. The mentors, a mix of undergraduate and post-graduate students, act as technicians in the workshop to help students produce work and advise students about the equipment. Each mentor works at least two, three hour sessions a week with availability extended towards the busy assessment period at the end of the year. Digi-Lab is not intended to replace the main workshops, but offers students a chance to experiment with advanced technology in a space and time that allows them to make mistakes. This provides an informal introduction to the equipment before students progress to using more advanced machines in the workshops.

At Northwest Missouri State University, workshop mentoring is applied in two rather divergent contexts. One is focused on the academic skills and consists of group sessions offering an opportunity to practice and evaluate note-taking or specific certifying exam preparation. In 2013, Northwest delivered eight teacher certification exam preparatory workshops to over 60 teacher candidates. In 2012 and 2013, the TDC also delivered four note-taking workshops to over 100 students. The other context is the university farm that includes workshop mentors in the day-to-day activities of the operations of the farm, which includes both livestock and crop production.

Evaluating the effectiveness of workshop mentoring should be focused on specific skills and outcomes. Similar to Skipper's (2005) suggestions for first-year programmes, performance-based assessments could be used to evaluate skills learned from the mentoring. Pre- and post-tests could also be used to measure the learning that occurred from the workshop (Norton and Agee, 2014). Maxwell (1979) also suggests student satisfaction and grades in evaluation of learning services. In workshop mentoring, such an analysis could compare the grades and scores of students in different courses who utilised the workshop mentoring and those who did not in various courses. Additionally, retention in a programme might help provide some assessment of a workshop mentoring programme's effectiveness.

The following table highlights some of the lessons learned through the partnership regarding workshop mentoring.

**Table 2. Workshop mentoring.**

<b>Particularly effective with</b>	Practical and applied courses where a mentor can provide support without knowledge or experience from subsequent course work.
<b>Typical delivery</b>	In addition to class.
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Skills:</b> mentees are encouraged to experiment in developing skills that further their own interests to engage them in shaping their own learning.
<b>Potential strength</b>	<b>Student ownership:</b> mentors develop activities to suit the needs of the mentees. Mentees can work on their

	own project or as a group with support from, and in collaboration with, mentors. <b>Faculty mentoring:</b> mentors can demonstrate techniques and procedures, particularly for new equipment.
<b>Potential pitfalls</b>	<b>Underutilisation:</b> partnering staff members may not collaborate with mentors in a manner which utilises the programme to its full benefit.

### ***One-on-one mentoring***

This type of academic mentoring follows a more traditional model with one-on-one sessions delivered on a drop-in or appointment basis. The mentee often presents a specific reason for seeking assistance. The mentor provides individualised support for the specific reason and potential contributing factors. Sessions may include help with structuring the work, remediation of the content, or showing the mentee where they can access the necessary resources.

One-on-one academic mentoring can help students of all abilities and academic profiles develop their learning abilities. Falchikov (2001) supports the view that one-on-one academic mentoring helps improve grades and that the interaction with peers helps students increase their knowledge and understanding. This type of mentoring has also been claimed to be motivating for students and increase student confidence and self-efficacy (Falchikov, 2001; Goldschmid and Goldschmid, 1976).

This style of academic mentoring can be arranged to provide consistent and progressive help throughout the academic term or targeted, intensive help when needed. Recurring sessions also help build a collaborative, developmental relationship between mentor and mentee. Students seeking assistance, however, can be narrowly focused on preparing for specific assessments (Ashwin, 2003). That pattern is consistent with the spike in demand for targeted assistance in the days before busy assessment periods at both universities.

Northwest Missouri State University offers one-on-one mentoring through the TDC with appointment-based sessions for specific classes or academic skills, such as note-taking and time management. In 2013-2014, over 30 TDC peer academic mentors held almost 2,000 one-on-one sessions and worked with 715 students. Between 2008 and 2012, 603 students responded to an anonymous, voluntary response survey regarding their experience with the services. A five-point Likert scale question measuring increase in knowledge resulted in 48% selecting a 4 or 5 (agree/strongly agree). Responses to a similar question, indicate that the mentor sessions also contributed to increased student confidence in their abilities.

At Birmingham City one-on-one mentoring activities are concentrated in the Centre for Academic Success which operates independently of StAMP. The mentoring activities focus on the development of core academic skills rather than offering assistance on specific classes or modules. Staff note that the image of the Centre for Academic Success has evolved from a place where students were embarrassed to go as it meant they were perceived to be struggling to one where students are present all the time, helping one another develop and succeed in getting higher grades. This progression suggests that the use of peers for service delivery helps reduce barriers to engagement as one-on-one tutoring is sometimes perceived as remedial, especially when combined with efforts to target specific populations of students.

Evaluation of one-on-one mentoring can be challenging, but there are some strategies that can be used. Norton and Agee (2014) suggest that satisfaction and changes of confidence could be used along with a change in student grades. In addition to these measures, Maxwell (1979) suggests using retention measures, test scores in specific courses or standardised scores, and faculty attitudes regarding the mentoring to evaluate the learning service. These broad strategies can be adapted to the specific institutional context and programme.

From both of the institutional contexts, the following table highlights the lessons learned regarding one-on-one mentoring:

**Table 3. One-on-one mentoring.**

<b>Particularly effective with</b>	<p><b>Courses with large class sizes:</b> allows each student to have individual contact focused on their unique needs.</p> <p><b>Students who are intimidated in group sessions:</b> allows students to receive support in a more discreet setting.</p>
<b>Typical delivery</b>	<p><b>In addition to class:</b> frequently offered on a voluntary basis, but some courses may require students to meet with a mentor.</p>
<b>Focus</b>	<p><b>Content and/or skills:</b> the mentee can lead the direction of the session.</p>
<b>Potential strength</b>	<p><b>Personalisation:</b> mentees receive the assistance they feel they need.</p> <p><b>Resource efficiency:</b> focuses resource allocation on student who perceive a need for interventions.</p>
<b>Potential pitfalls</b>	<p><b>Mentor assuming a position of expert knowledge:</b> interactions more like a tutorial with a faculty member than a collaboration where the mentor helps the mentee build capacity.</p> <p><b>Does not foster more extensive peer network:</b> whilst the mentee is collaborating with a peer they aren't building wider networks of support with their other peers.</p> <p><b>Creates dependency:</b> if the mentor actively completes tasks the mentee will not learn the related content and skills and will continue to require support.</p>

## ***Study group mentoring***

Study group mentoring typically provides extra assistance with content for a specific class. At Birmingham City and Northwest the sessions take place outside of class time and can focus on a range of topics as defined by the mentor and mentees. Study group mentors utilise collaborative learning techniques to help students develop greater understanding of the subject (Blanc et al., 1983; Blanc and Martin, 1994; Bowles et al., 2008). Table 4 includes an overview of study group mentoring given experiences at both institutions as well as related research.

At Northwest Missouri State University, study group mentoring is one of the principle forms of academic mentoring and is based on the Supplemental Instruction (SI) model from University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC). The SI model focuses on traditionally difficult courses and, as such, the SI programme is intentionally non-remedial (Arendale, 1994; Burmeister, 1996; Martin and Arendale, 1992). In the U.K., SI is sometimes referred to as Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) or Peer Assisted Learning (PAL). The SI programme has been credited with significant benefits for students who attend the sessions, including better grades than the students who do not attend (Blanc and Martin, 1994; Gattis, 2000) even when accounting for prior academic performance (Malm et al., 2011) and motivation (Gattis, 2000). Because of the focus on difficult courses, it makes the SI programme intentionally non-remedial (Martin and Arendale, 1992; Burmeister, 1996; Arendale, 1994) and removes the stigma of extra support.

At both universities study group mentors are typically more experienced students who were successful when they completed the class as a student, an approach that is consistent with the SI model (Arendale, 1994). This allows the academic mentor to guide students through particularly difficult parts of the class based on their prior experiences. At Northwest Missouri State University, average enrolment in SI courses is 2,000 students per term and approximately 36% utilise the services of the academic mentor, known as an SI leader. Each SI leader holds around forty-two sessions lasting close to an hour a piece. Since the fall of 2008, the average grade point average (GPA) of students who attended two or more SI sessions was 2.35, whilst the average GPA of non-SI attendees was 1.74. This is a difference of 0.61 which roughly translates to a 5% increase in the student's grade if they attended SI sessions.

The evaluation of study group mentoring will typically involve assessment of an impact on student grades and success. Similar to the other models of academic mentoring, Maxwell's (1979) suggestions of incorporating student satisfaction, student usage, faculty attitudes, and grades also applies to this method of mentoring. Specifically, mentoring programmes can compare the grades of the students who attended the mentoring sessions and those who did not to provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme. Additionally, retention figures and success in later courses could be used to assess the impact of this type of mentoring. Congos and Schoeps (1997) cautions that when a programme is voluntary, the evaluators need to control for self-selection bias and this is something that applies for all of the mentoring models detailed in this paper. However, even where there is compulsory mentoring participation on a programme there are other variables such as the mentees motivation to engage, the quality of the mentor and outside influences that may impact on student performance.

The following table offers key lessons learned from the partners:

**Table 4. Study group mentoring.**

<b>Particularly effective with</b>	Courses with heavy reading requirements and traditional lecture structure where the mentors can help facilitate active learning.
<b>Typical delivery</b>	Outside of class, but typically linked to a course and/or instructor.
<b>Focus</b>	<b>Content:</b> Mentees are encouraged to review theory from lectures and discuss content to clarify misunderstandings.
<b>Potential strength</b>	<b>Shared responsibility:</b> mentors facilitate activities and encourage mentees to build networks of support <b>Non-remedial:</b> the interactive nature of the sessions is not perceived as getting help, but as engaging in and taking an active role in learning.
<b>Potential pitfalls</b>	<b>Settings not conducive to mentoring:</b> sessions in classroom space can reduce the collaborative energy and may create a dynamic leading to a "re-lecture"

	format.
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## **Conclusions**

### **Peer-to-peer academic mentoring**

Programmes at both universities illustrate the ways peer academic mentoring can be applied to improve learning and engagement, providing a reference for considering the structure of the programmes as well as potential strengths and pitfalls. Given the importance of applying peer mentoring in a manner that fits with the institutional culture it may be counterproductive to be too prescriptive. At the same time, it is beneficial to note that academic mentoring programmes that embed academic skills within the course or that are class specific have greater participation. Similarly, academic mentoring that occurs within a group is more effective at gaining regular attendance than one-on-one mentoring programmes.

Experiences across the programmes and across the two institutions also highlight a number of considerations, including the importance of creating a culture that views academic mentoring as a developmental process that all students can benefit from rather than being a form of remedial support for struggling students. Those benefits are more likely when programmes are designed to encourage skill development so mentees can become effective self-directed learners, reducing the potential for dependency on an academic mentor.

Utilising a broad range of mentoring models also helps meet the needs of a heterogeneous student population while contributing to a culture emphasising self-directed learning through skill development. Across the institution the various models can have a synergistic effect, especially when coordinated through a single cohesive institutional programme. This centralised administration also facilitates programme evaluation. Academic mentoring can be difficult to evaluate, so institutions should consider and formalise an evaluation plan including both qualitative and quantitative measures before the programmes begin.

Finally, in this consideration of models and abstractions around mentoring, we should not forget the individual, and the transformative effect that mentoring can have on the students

engaging. Mentees are supported to build levels of confidence and understanding that ultimately may impact on their academic performance and personal development. Mentors gain by increasing their understanding through explaining and see other skills develop that will support their own development and employability.

### **Institutional partnerships**

Representatives at both universities have found that openly collaborating with another institution can be a mutually beneficial experience. Each university gains inspiration and insights into best practice whilst benefitting from a reinvigoration of working practices. Indeed, at Birmingham City University, the institutional learning has led to the creation of a new university wide approach to transition and the first year experience. Faculty that participate in these mentoring programmes benefit from engagement with others involved in the initiative from other schools. At Northwest Missouri State University, that engagement provided inspiration for innovation in the SI leader role.

The strength of the partnership is based on the willingness to freely share ideas and experiences. This allowed representatives to establish trust and deepen the collaboration. The dynamic nature of the relationship has been important for its longevity, which is notable given findings that 50 percent of partnerships dissolve within their first year (Lasker et al., 2001). As the relationship continues, opportunities for creative collaboration have emerged that further strengthens the partnership.

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## ***Author details***

Kirk Skoglund is the Academic Engagement Co-ordinator at the Talent Development Center at Northwest Missouri State University and co-ordinates various learning assistance systems, including the peer tutoring and supplemental instruction (SI) programmes. He was formally a student at Northwest and worked in a variety of campus roles as a student employee.

Luke Millard is an Associate Professor and Head of Student Engagement at Birmingham City University. His writing revolves around student engagement and student transitions. Luke's present area of research is student employment on campus and the impact on student learning.

Alisha Francis is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Northwest Missouri State University. As an organisational psychologist, her interests include the way systems influence learning and behaviour. She applies that interest in researching systems to support student learning and success.

Luke Nagle was a successful Architecture student at Birmingham City and he co-ordinated the mentoring programme alongside his studies as part of the university's student jobs on campus programme. Luke led induction, monitoring and evaluation activities across the university and is now pursuing a career in his chosen field.

Stuart Brand is Director of Learning Experience at Birmingham City University and was the instigator of the mentoring initiatives at the university and the partnership with Northwest. His significant contribution to the partnership with Northwest was recognised with the award of an Honorary Doctorate by Northwest Missouri State University.