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Bringing Inclusion to College: The Importance of Peer Mentorship for College Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Georgia Educational Research Association
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2020 GERA Conference (October 2, 2020)

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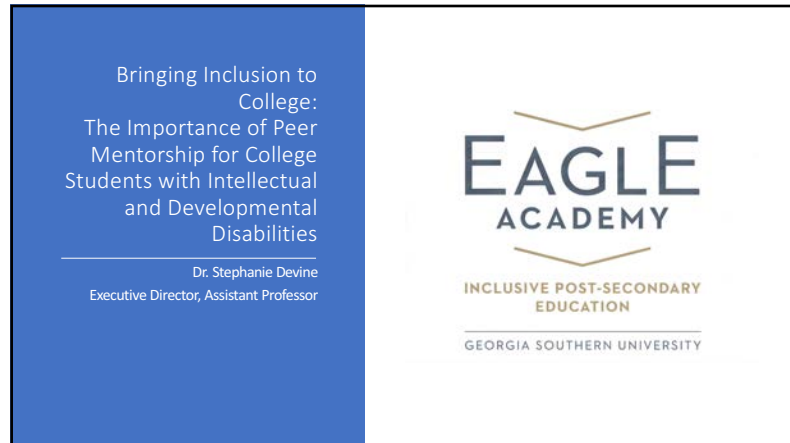
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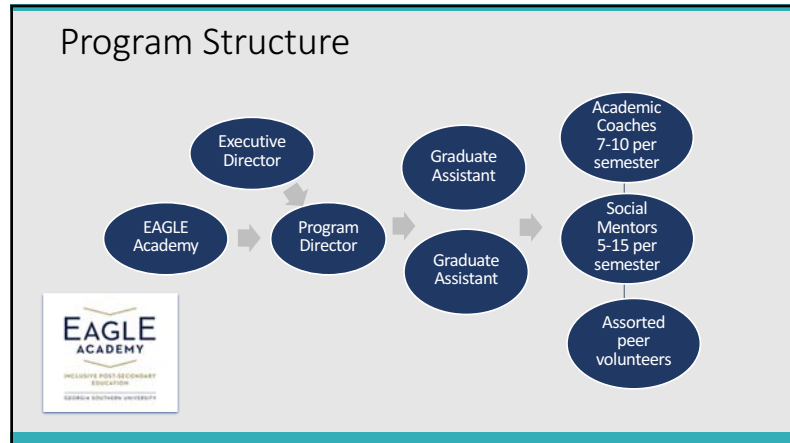
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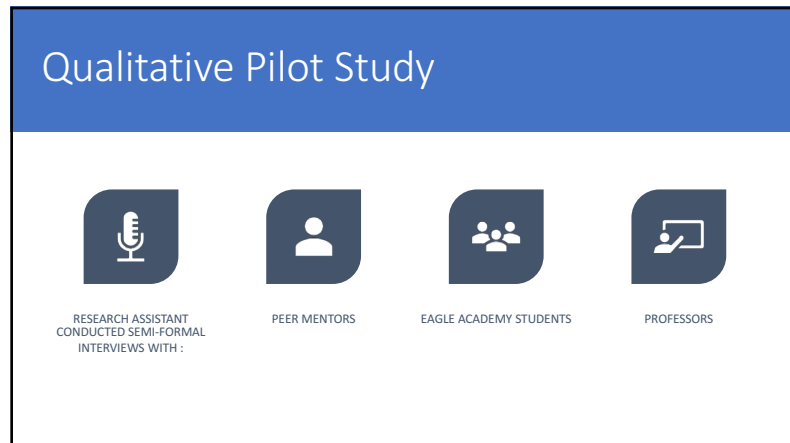


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Immersive Experience

Peer mentors encourage full Inclusion into the college Experience.

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Peer Mentors: Making Connections


- "I really enjoyed feeling like I made a difference in other students' lives on campus, you know being a college student, you can get very bogged down and you can tend to take the whole college experience for granted. But knowing that, you know, I helped students who, you know, really needed it on campus really makes it feel like I'm taking full advantage of my college experience"
- "I think my favorite part about actually being in it and being a part of it was probably just the connections I made with the students."

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Using Peer Mentors to Promote Independence

- Peer mentors met weekly with assigned student
- Worked together to set up a goal for the week
- Discussed progress, made an action plan
- Evaluated progress at the end of the week




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Peer Mentors: Promoting Independence

- “We used the smartboard in EAGLE academy, I loved using that. We used online Google docs to compare notes.”
- “...looking at the material toward the beginning of the week, looking at the outline, seeing what due dates were coming, and really making a detailed list of that, knowing when quizzes were due...things like that.”




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EAGLE Academy students: Favorite Things About Having Peer Mentors

- “They didn’t hold my hand the whole way.”
- “They would help like they would help me read the question if I didn’t understand it and they would like give me...they would shorten the question and put it to a familiar answer to where I could like understand what it means, and I would get it right. It would help me like get homework done early. They helped me get stuff done.”
- On switching to online instruction, “I’m very comfortable with the learning and technology online because I have great people on my side to help me [referring to peer mentors]. The main thing I’m going to take away from this experience is doing stuff on my own. It’s given me a big opportunity to be more independent.”




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EAGLE Academy Students: What They Want

- “... I would love to have a peer mentor that can like connect with me on the same page and like help me get everything organized and get things done before the due dates.”
- “I would like to see more of them, but I just like them having more of a cheerful side. It’s okay to have one bad day, but like, I like seeing a more cheerful side of them, and excited, and ready and prepared.”




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Professors: On Having EA Students in Class

- “I enjoyed his personality, and he was a delight to me. I was happy about his attitude. His attitude was, he really wanted to do the work, and do what was expected of him. And better yet, he wanted to do the work himself. And in a lot of things in life, we may not be the best math student, but if we have grit and determination, we can go places with that. Even the smartest doesn't have the best experience, it is the ones that work the hardest. He may not have made an A, but he worked for, for my class. He not only was wanting to belong, but he did well in group work. I was very pleased he wanted to work with others. He kept going to the very end.”




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Professors: On Peer Mentor Support

- “The way it worked in my class, I asked my students to sit in alphabetic order to learn names better, and the peer mentor wasn't sitting by the student, but I didn't think the program wanted attention brought to the student by the peer mentor. They took notes, and no one knew anything, they thought it was another student.”
- “there were times they would email me outside of class to clarify, sometimes they would come in. Most of the time, when the students came to office hours, the mentor would be there too, but they stood back and let the student do the asking and would clarify if something needed clarification and whatnot.”




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Future Plans Based on Feedback

- Further develop training to include importance of attitude and approach
- Ongoing analysis on the effects of peer mentors on academic, social, and independent functioning skills of program students.
- Ongoing conversations with stakeholders on what works and what does not.



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