

COACHES FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Introduction

A focus group was conducted with coaches to get feedback regarding their training and work experiences. The focus group consisted of 12 coaches and included a mix of 1st and 2nd year pathways coaches and “general” coaches (coaches not associated with a pathway). The coaches were majority female (9) compared to male (3). The focus group lasted approximately 1.5 hours and was facilitated by Patty Quinones, Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Angie Alvarez, Pathways Outreach Specialist.

Results

Training

What was the one thing that you found particularly useful about the training?

The most helpful aspects of training included:

- Case studies: Good way of letting coaches understand what their jobs would be like without the benefit of shadowing other coaches.
- Visits from various departments were especially helpful because it allowed coaches to properly refer students to services on campus.
- Hearing from former coaches provided insight on what the job was like
- Getting everyone in the same room at the same time was helpful for getting on the same page.

Was there anything that you thought was not useful, unnecessary, or confusing?

Coaches said that the reading apprenticeship training was confusing partly because not much time was spent on the subject and partly because it wasn't presented in the context of coaching.

What changes would you recommend to make the training more effective or engaging?

Recommendations included the following:

- A training manual that contained pathways, IGETC, transfer requirements, and international student requirements would be helpful and would give them something they could refer to throughout the year.
- Consistent updates from Pathways staff
- Provide technical training such as how to use SARS, TLC database, and excel, as well as provide direction on what kind of data coaches should collect and report/enter.
- Possible incentives for students to visit with general coaches (general coaches indicated that at times they have a hard time getting students to visit with them).
- A webpage devoted to coaching to make coaching more visible to students and faculty.
- Supervisors shadow new coaches/sit in on a session to provide feedback.

COACHES FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Other than the week of training, what influenced your ability to serve as a success coach this year?

- International student handbook was a great resource for the international pathways coach.
- Coaches learned a lot by attending workshops in the transfer center and felt better able to help students with transfer information.
- Some coaches accompanied students to various department for services and found this to be a very enlightening experience.
- International mentor counselors were an added resource for the international coaches.
- Monthly professional development workshops were helpful (i.e., mental health, suicide)
- GroupMe provided coaches an avenue to communicate with other coaches where they could ask each other questions.
- Coaches indicated they could rely on their coach leads for anything they needed.
- Pathways staff were available to answer any questions coaches had.

How well do you understand the Reading Apprenticeship framework in the context of your coaching role?

Most coaches stated they did not remember the reading apprenticeship framework primarily because the framework was present briefly (an hour or less) and not presented in a way that would be relatable to their experience as a coach. It appeared that coaches were unaware they had to incorporate RA into their sessions with students.

How well do you understand the Appreciative Advising framework in your role as a coach?

Coaches indicated that they didn't truly understand the appreciative advising framework until they started working with students and realized that what they were doing during their sessions was reflective of the appreciative advising framework.

Ongoing Support

How well were you supported while serving as a coach this year?

Generally coaches felt supported by their fellow coaches, coach leads, and other college staff. Some of the events that helped facilitate the supportive environment were attending workshops, reaching out to other staff and faculty (i.e., deans) and coach gatherings.

Is there any other form of support that would have helped to make your work experience better?

Coaches said that having more opportunities to have their work evaluated would be helpful. Some coaches indicated that they previously had the opportunity to reflect on the work they did for the year and have a one-on-one with a coach lead at the end of the year, however that opportunity did not present itself this year. They hoped this is something they can continue to do in the future.

Working with Students

What aspects of working with students did you enjoy the most? Why?

Initial response to this question was that coaches enjoyed "EVERYTHING" about working with students. Including:

COACHES FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

- Building relationships with students
- Being able to help students achieve their academic goals
- Seeing students develop and grow from semester to semester
- Feeling fortunate to be able to “walk with them on their journey”

What were some of the challenges you faced as a coach?

- Huge caseloads ranging from 160 to 180 students. As a result, many coaches reporting scheduling back-to-back meetings with no time for breaks, hard to schedule last minute or drop in appointments with students. With a 20 hour a week work schedule it was hard for coaches to handle both the administrative responsibilities and meeting with students. Coaches reported putting in extra hours.
- Balancing work and grad school is challenging.
- Coaches have reported that lack of office space and computers has been a challenge. At time coaches bring in their personal lap tops to work so they can free up the office computers for other coaches.
- General success coaches indicated it would have been beneficial to meet with various divisions, staff, and faculty so that people knew what their roles are on campus.

Second Year Coaches

How did the structure of the career cluster caseload work in second year?

- It was tricky when students changed their majors and continued to visit with the same coach who did not have as much information for them on their new major.
- Coaches said that they need more training for the meta majors they are assigned to. To cover the gap in knowledge some coaches talked to division deans to get a better understanding of majors.

How could the work being done in first year better support the transition to second year?

- Creating plans of action that will help students meet their goals.
- Providing students with a timeline for transfer during their first year.
- Training coaches on the transfer process so that they are better inform and can start providing students with information during their first year.

Recommendations

Are there any changes you would recommend to make coaching more effective?

- Coaches should have more training specific to the student population they will be working with. International Student Pathways coach stated that she had to do a lot of on-the-job training – seeking and learning international student requirements.
- Have a better structure for the general coaches. The general coaches stated that they did not feel as supported as Pathways coaches. They moved around from office to office and most of the time had to explain their purpose/roles when moving from center to center. At times general coaches were mistaken for tutors.

COACHES FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Is there anything else you would like to discuss that you believe would help to improve the coaching program?

- Have a different name for the general coaches. All coaches agreed that “General Coach” has a negative connotation.
- Again, provide a better structure for general coaches. General Coaches indicated feeling isolated and not feeling comfortable asking coach leads questions. All coaches agreed that there is a sense that general coaches are not welcomed at TLC or other pathways spaces.
- Addressing spacing issues and making centers more accessible to students.