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How to Help Students Develop Projects Independently for Self-Directed Learning

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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2016

Abstract

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Evelyn N. Sears

MAT, National Louis University, 1992

BA, Northeastern Illinois University, 1982

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Experiential learning in adult education is on the rise. A small private college in the southeast United States initiated a program that required 3 experiential learning projects to be completed in addition to coursework. The problem was that less than 8% of students had independently developed their first project. Instead, they completed a project proposed by faculty. This situation resulted in student dependency on faculty rather than promoting self-directed learning. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about how to help students develop independent projects for the self-directed learning program. Experiential and self-directed learning theories formed the conceptual framework. The guiding question focused on how a select group of students described their ability to conduct a self-directed learning project. For this case study, individual interviews and documents were collected from 7 participants in the self-directed learning program. Analysis of the data by coding individual units of meaning revealed these 5 themes, which formed the basis of the findings: characteristics, self-motivation, lack of assistance received, personal gain, and advice for others. The commonly held major theme was personal gain. The second theme, goal setting, was discrepant. These were the major findings, which formed the basis for a proposed professional development training program for faculty facilitating the self-directed learning program. The implication for social change include emphasizing the importance of self-directed learning, supporting faculty for self-directed learning, and promoting lifelong learning. As a result of participating in this training, faculty will be better able to mentor students in the self-directed learning program.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my husband Al. He has always had faith in my ability to complete anything I set my mind to. His love and support has enabled me to push through the ups and downs of my doctoral journey. For that, I am thankful. I am saddened that my parents are not here to partake in the joy of this accomplishment. Growing up my dad continually reminded me how important a good education was. He was a voracious reader and I gained my love of reading from him. To David and Katherine, I am so excited that both of you are back in school broadening your horizons. I love you both.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

In August 2013, a small private college (SPC) in the southeast United States instituted a program, whereby all students were required to complete three projects in addition to their coursework. For the purpose of the study, this program will be referred to as the Pathfinder program. The foundation of the program was that students would be able to independently develop projects. But only a small number independently developed their first project. If students in the Pathfinder program were unable to independently develop a project, they were allowed to complete a project that had already been proposed by faculty members. Using these prepared projects fostered dependence on faculty members instead of promoting independence. The problem impacts all students who are unable to independently develop their projects. SPC has a requirement that all undergraduates must complete three projects in order to graduate. Students who choose an already proposed project had to develop two more projects independently.

All incoming freshmen at SPC are required to complete three projects during their four years at the college. Freshmen are less prepared for college than their counterparts were 40 years ago (Greene, 2011). This generation of college freshmen possesses technological skills, but are lacking in problem solving and communication skills (Greene, 2011). Project based learning (PBL) assists students with learning communication skills, problem solving skills, and critical thinking skills (Roessingh & Chambers, 2011). Students starting school may be dependent learners which could be a contributing factor. Adults move in the direction of independence at a dissimilar pace

(Merriam et al., 2007). Merriam et al. (2007) discussed four variables that could also account for whether learners are independent. These variables included skills associated with the learning process, knowledge of the subject matter, sense of one's ability to complete the task, and willingness to commit to the program.

Definition of the Problem

The mission of the Pathfinder program was to expand the scope of academics to include co-curricular projects. Its broader goal was to develop projects independently. The three projects that all incoming freshman were required to complete, could be chosen from the following six areas: service-learning, vocation, leadership, creativity and innovation, cultural awareness, and social ethics. Through exploration of the six different areas, students engaged with their peers, as well as faculty, staff, and community members. The Pathfinder committee (SPC, 2014) defined the six independent project areas as follows. These distinct project-based areas allow students to develop new skills (Roessingh & Chambers, 2011). (a) Service learning projects fill a community need. These projects allow students to discover how they can make a difference in society. (b) Vocation projects immerse students into the work place. Students can complete an internship, research occupations, or complete any other related project. By exploring the work world, students have the opportunity to pursue their passion and refine their skills. (c) Students, who choose a leadership project, will take on that role to accomplish a goal. This leadership role can be direct or an observation/interaction with someone in a leadership position. Being an officer of a club, or working with a community leader is an example of possible leadership projects.

(d) Creativity and innovation evokes thoughts of the arts. Any experience that is creative and innovative such as implementation of a new strategy to increase efficiency or productivity, directing a pageant, or filming a documentary falls into this category. (e) Cultural awareness affords students the opportunity to expand their world to other cultures, ethnicities, and differing socioeconomic backgrounds. Students will gain knowledge and skills that will benefit them in this ever-changing global society. (f) The last area that students may choose from is called social ethics. Social ethics encompasses many issues including justice, poverty, and individual rights. As an example, students may involve themselves in political campaigns, planning an Earth Day event, or attending a conference on ethics. The elements of the Pathfinder program are the initial proposal submitted to the Pathfinder committee for approval, and an oral and written self-reflection to focus on the implications of the endeavor. Each project requires a 30-hour commitment.

The literature review conducted, illustrated that programs like the Pathfinder program are embedded in college coursework. The Pathfinder program is unique because the required projects are co-curricular. Less than 8% of students at SPC independently developed their first project. Czabanowska et al. (2012) reported that young adults continue to develop cognitive skills, which includes the ability to plan and set goals. The implication for this program was that many learners might need support to accomplish certain tasks.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

SPC has two campuses. The main campus is mainly a residential campus, while the satellite campus is a commuter campus. The total student enrollment for 2014 was 2,120. This number included graduates (643) and undergraduates (1,121) who are full-time and 256 who are part-time. The major difference is that the commuter campus has some nontraditional students who work during the day. Nontraditional students may have employment experience, but lack critical thinking skills (Kenner, & Weinerman, 2011). Many adults work in jobs that are repetitive in nature. Jobs in factories, retail, and the food industry do not foster analytical thinking. One problem that non-traditional students may have is scheduling the extra hours required to complete projects.

The enrollment for both campuses is shown in Table 1. The Pathfinder program was instituted in August of 2013. As of December, 2014, only 75 students (12%) had or were participating in the program. And only 53 of the students had independently developed a project. This number represented 8% of the total enrollment. The remaining 22 Pathfinder students used an already proposed project. The overarching goals for the Pathfinder program were to encourage students to set goals, and to become self-directed learners.

The enrollment data in Table 1 compared to the number of students who have independently developed a project is a significantly small percentage (8%). The purpose of this study was to understand about independently developed projects for the Pathfinder program. Faculty members may make the assumption that all students have the learning

Table 1

SPC Student Enrollment

	Freshman	Sophomore	Total
Main campus	304	173	477
Satellite campus	102	68	170
Total	406	242	648

Note. Enrollment numbers were obtained from SPC on November, 2014.

skills they need to make the transition to college (Greene, 2011; Black, 2010). But while this generation of college students (Millennials or Generation Y) has been brought up with technology and are savvy using computers searches, it is deficient in its ability to analyze the material they find (Black, 2010). Black (2010) concluded that the experiences of Millennials are different and so is the way they think and process information. It was the goal of the Pathfinder program to help students with the skills they need to independently develop Pathfinder projects. In order to complete three Pathfinder projects, students must begin early.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

There is a wealth of literature on PBL and its benefits for students. Roessingh and Chambers (2011) reported that there is a push to use inquiry learning as the overall model in higher education in Canada. The basis for that push is to help students gain communication skills, creative and critical thinking skills, and problem solving skills. Schwalm and Tylek (2012) pointed out that PBL gave students an opportunity to be

involved in relevant projects that will necessitate critical thinking and collaboration. In PBL students have more independence over what they learn (Kubiatko & Vaculova, 2011) because they independently choose and develop their projects. These projects foster critical thinking and problem solving skills (SPC, 2014). Kubiatko and Vaculova (2011) described PBL using the terms *vertical learning* (content knowledge) and horizontal learning (skills gained).

According to Lee, Blackwell, Drake, and Moran (2014) PBL in K-12 education has outpaced implementation in higher education. PBL has advantages for learning in higher education. Tamim and Grant (2013) concluded that PBL is an instructional method that not only increases content knowledge, but also develops the whole learner. The Pathfinder projects which take place outside of the classroom create experiences that help students with content knowledge and personal growth (SPC, 2014). Implementation of PBL in higher education is challenging (Lee et al., 2014). PBL is generally a model that is used within a classroom setting. Instructors need to shift from being the content expert to that of a facilitator (Lee et al., 2014). There is a problem in SPC. That problem specifically is that only a small number of students have independently developed their first project. Currently, students are being allowed to complete a project that been proposed by faculty. However, this creates dependency instead of promoting independence. This problem impacts all students who have enrolled since August, 2013 when the Pathfinder program was instituted. The Pathfinder program is co-curricular and students must independently develop three projects. There are many possible factors contributing to this problem, among which are students not being independent learners.

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to address this problem by understanding independently developed projects for the Pathfinder program.

Definitions

Andragogy: Teaching strategies for adult learners which is based on several assumptions. The six assumptions that separate andragogy from pedagogy are: the need to know, the learners' self-concept, the role of the learners' experiences, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation (Knowles, Holten, & Swanson, 2012).

Experiential learning: Creating knowledge from experience, and using reflection to gain meaning from the experience (Warren, Hof, McGriff, & Morris, 2012; Bergsteiner, Avery, & Neuman, 2010).

Project-based learning: A way to teach concepts and skills in a learner-centered classroom. Students develop critical thinking and collaborative skills (Grant, 2011; Schwalm & Tylek, 2012). PBL is learner centered (Kubiatko & Vaculova, 2011)

Self-determination theory: A theory of motivation which says that intrinsic motivation contributes to learning. Self-determination theory states that if three needs are met, intrinsic motivation is furthered. These needs are: autonomy, competence, and relatedness Guiffrida et al., 2013).

Self-directed learning: Students readiness to take part in learning that is defined by the student, rather than the teacher (English & Katsantas, 2013). Other descriptors include: self-planned learning, inquiry method, independent learning, and self-education (Knowles, 1975).

Service learning: Course-based experiences in which the activity meets community needs. Service learning is also a form of experiential learning (Eppler et al., 2011; Moore, 2010).

Significance of the Study

PBL is embedded in coursework (Tamim & Grant, 2013; Roessingh & Chambers, 2011; Grant, 2011). The three Pathfinder projects are distinct and co-curricular. Kubiatko and Vaculova (2011) posited that the strongpoint of PBL is the integration of knowledge, theory, and practice. Independently developing a project for the Pathfinder program involves setting goals. These projects present an opportunity for students to decide what they want to learn. But only 8% of students independently developed projects. Education has moved from teacher centered to learner centered (Reitsma, Guglielmino, & Mentz 2012). PBL is learner centered and the instructor must become a facilitator (Kubiatko & Vaculova, 2011).

One of the major differences between the Pathfinder projects and PBL is the project itself. In PBL projects are designed by the instructor and should include developing new understandings and skills (Roessingh & Chambers, 2011). Grant (2011) reported that when choosing a task learners consider resources, time, and difficulty of the project. The Pathfinder projects, on the other hand, are developed by the student. The student determines what her goals are for the project and what concrete product if any will result (other than the reflection paper). The analysis of the data from this study pointed towards the need for a professional development program (PDP, Appendix A). The PDP will assist sponsors in guiding students Pathfinder program. Sponsors guide,

motivate, and provide support for students attempting to independently develop Pathfinder projects.

Guiding Question

Experiential/service learning projects in higher education are associated with particular college courses. Students attend class and participate in the prescribed learning projects. The Pathfinder program is independent of all college coursework. Consequently, students are required to independently develop a project. Many students are used to teacher-centered instruction. Students are not self-directed learners and are having difficulty independently developing their Pathfinder program project. Faculty members do not always realize that students need the support to become independent learners. Even when faculty members know that students are struggling, the faculty do not know how to support them. The research question that guided this study was: How do a select group of students at a small private college in the Southeast region of the United States describe their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project? By investigating why students some students are having success, it is expected that Pathfinder program committee will be able to facilitate changes to assist current and future students.

Review of the Literature

Search Strategy

The literature review for this study used the following databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, and SAGE journals were utilized. ProQuest Dissertation database was also used to search for recent dissertations on experiential or self-directed learning. The following

terms were used for online searches, *pbl*, *experiential learning, service learning, self-directed learning*, *facilitating self-directed learning*, and *self-determination theory*. I also researched the following organizations, Association for Experiential Education (AEE), Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOC), and National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE). These organizations promote learning outside of the classroom and publish scholarly journals. An example would be the *Journal of Experiential Learning* published by AEE.

While there is an abundance of literature on experiential and self-directed learning, all journal articles on experiential and service learning were about projects or course-based internships. Course-based projects typically have planned internships or field experiences. The gap in literature was the lack of research on co-curricular projects. This justifies the study of why are students having difficulty independently developing a Pathfinder project.

The literature review will include: theoretical framework, experiential learning, self-directed learning, and facilitating self-directed learning. Implications from the preliminary research will be discussed.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was the constructivist theory of learning. Many of the experiential learning theorists, Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget are constructivists (Yardley, Teunissen, & Dornan, 2012). Constructivists believe that learners construct meaning from their experiences. An important perception of experiential learning makes the assumption that when a learner reflects on his experience he constructs, or builds new

experiences (Caulfield & Woods, 2013). Douglass and Morris (2014) explained that in the constructivist theory of learning, students understand context by actively engaging in activities instead of accepting information. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2012) learning is tied to context, and adults need to make meaning of their experiences. The overarching premise of the Pathfinder program is for participants to independently create their own projects. By creating projects students will be able to take ownership of their experiences.

In the constructivist learning theory, problem solving is fundamental. The learner needs to be self-directed in order to solve problems (Hrynchak & Batty, 2012). Constructivists believe that the core of learning is on the learner and the teacher is the facilitator (Hrynchak & Batty, 2012). Learners need to be supported if they are not self-directed. Additionally, reflection is necessary so that learners can integrate their new knowledge with previous or existing knowledge. Students learn from realistic activities and transfer their knowledge into understanding (Chan, 2012). Through interviews and document review, the researcher may be able to determine how the participants independently developed their project.

Experiential Learning

The Pathfinder projects are based on experiential learning. After the 30-hour projects are concluded, written and oral reflections are required. John Dewey was a philosopher who wrote about the importance of learning by doing (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1938) believed that experiential learning is important to adult learning. Other theorists who played a role in development of an experiential learning model are, Kurt

Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, and Carl Jung to name a few (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Kolb and Kolb (2005) defined experiential learning as the creation of knowledge through the conversion of our experiences. Concrete experience and abstract conceptualization assist in grasping experiences, while reflective observation and active experimentation transforms experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Pathfinder participants will move through Kolb's experiential learning cycle by experiencing and immersing themselves in real situations. Reflecting on these experiences participants adapt their reflections into abstract concepts and draw out new experiences.

According to Shellman's (2014) review of the literature the notion that experiential learning plays a role in college programs is supported. Experiential learning programs provide students with many chances to develop skills necessary to become independent learners. The skills that participants need to independently develop projects should be a part of the data that will be collected. These skills include, setting and achieving goals, leadership, decision making, and problem solving (Shellman, 2014).

Interest in service learning in colleges and universities has been on the rise (Manolis & Burns, 2011). The majority of colleges and universities' mission and value statements contain a social element. SPC's value statement reflects a fostering of civic participation, personal growth and ethics. The Pathfinder projects are a way for students to realize that they have a responsibility to their communities. Students are exposed to a society that continues to grow globally. Institutions of higher education are increasing their efforts to supply students with opportunities to take part in community service (Taggart & Crisp, 2011). Eppler, Ironsmith, Dingle, and Errickson (2011) compared

service learning to non-service learning students. The findings of the study showed that service learning helped students gain self-esteem. In addition, students were motivated to use volunteerism for professional advancement. Service learning is a useful way to assist students adapt to college (Eppler et al., 2011). Bartolome (2013) also explored what effect service learning has on college students. The service-learning project showed substantial personal growth and learning (Bartolome, 2013).

Caulfield and Woods (2013) reported that research in education has shown that adults successfully learn through experience. Students in the Pathfinder program have past experiences that should assist them in independently developing projects. Experiential learning affords participants many chances to gain skills that help them become more confident and empowered (Perrin, 2014; Shellman, 2014). When students feel empowered, they believe they have control over their lives and possibly the lives of others.

Allen (2011) discussed three reasons that experiential learning should be incorporated into the accounting curriculum. The rationality that was used for accounting is universal across all content areas. The three reasons reported were, experiential learning makes students marketable, completing hands-on learning enhances student learning, and learning experiences can be pleasurable (Allen, 2011). Students who are involved in experiential learning show growth in many areas. In a survey conducted by Fedynich, Doan-Crider, and Fedynich (2012), 93% of the participants believed that their experiential learning experience assisted them in improving their learning. Experiential learning promotes leadership skills because students become a partner in creating

knowledge (Wurr & Hamilton, 2012). Eppler et al. (2011) found that students' perceptions of experiential learning included personal growth and development. Through reflection, students are able to transfer their experiences into knowledge that assists in learning (Simons et al., 2012).

The Pathfinder program was developed to make SPC's undergraduate students distinctive. Students graduate with a separate transcript for the projects that they have completed. Through these experiential learning projects, students gain a greater understanding of what goes on in the community and workplace. Barnett (2012) studied students who were completing internships. This particular internship study looked at what students gained from participating in the workplace. The findings illustrated the difference in students' expectations of the workplace versus the reality (Barnett, 2012).

The Association of Experiential Education (AEE, 2015) believed that experiential learning helped to increase learning, acquire skills, and promote adults' contribution to their communities. Twelve principles of experiential learning are espoused on the AEE website. These principles include, experiences that are organized so that the learner takes initiative and makes decisions, learners take responsibility and construct meaning, learning is personal and is the basis for future learning, and the educator's primary role is support for the learner (AEE, 2015).

Experiential learning allows students to take their experiences and convert them into knowledge (Chan, 2012). Maskulka, Stout, and Massad (2011) professed that experiential learning engages students in their education and helps them to make that leap

between theory and practice. By doing so, it gets them ready for the real world (Maskulka et al., 2011). Students find it challenging to take responsibility for their education (Warburton & Volet, 2012). Warburton and Volet (2012) suggested that self-directed learners ask questions to assist in setting their goals. Students are being introduced to the Pathfinder program as part of a one-semester course that they attend in their freshman year. Participants will have a faculty/staff sponsor once they decide on their project.

Experiential learning helps students become more motivated to become self-regulated learners (Sibthorp et al., 2011). Douglass and Morris (2014) conducted a study to investigate student perspectives on self-directed learning. The purpose of the study was to find out what encourages self-directive learning and how can the college assist in helping the students become self-directed learners. Students need to become self-directed learners in order to be able to set goals and plan a course of action (English & Katsantas, 2013). Students entering as freshman are used to teacher-centered classrooms and have difficulty making the transition to becoming an independent learner. According to English and Katsantas (2013) teachers believed that some of the students' classroom difficulties stem from lack of motivation, inability to take control of their own learning and poor attitudes towards learning. Students come to college from teacher-centered classrooms and old habits are difficult to change. Developing self-directed learning skills is necessary, and critical in the first year of college. By doing so, students will be more successful and satisfied with their college experience (Greene, 2011).

In a study on experiential learning programs completed by Perrin (2014) when

students were allowed to choose and design their own projects they became autonomous learners. Experiential projects can increase student confidence (Perrin, 2014). Liu and - Olson (2011) are proponents of experiential learning. They believed that when students participate in real life experiences they absorb knowledge that they are able to apply later. Experiential learning promotes students' attitudes, responsibility, and assists them in comprehending their deficiencies and strong points (Caulfield & Woods, 2013; Ghose, 2010). Experiential learning results in positive outcomes due to students taking an active role in their own learning (McCarthy, 2010). Sibthorp et al. (2011) agreed that experiential learning created involvement and influenced future learning. Experiential learning is a way to assist students in adjusting to college, learning social expectation, set goals (Eppler et al., 2011). Current and future students will benefit from this study due to self-directed learning positively predicting academic success (Mega et al., 2013). Students, who have independently designed their first Pathfinder project, will have the experience to be able to develop their next two projects.

Self-Directed Learning

Knowles's theory of andragogy relates to experiential learning and the goals of the Pathfinder program. Andragogy is based on certain assumptions. The first one of these assumptions is that adults move from being dependent, to becoming self-directed (Merriam et al., 2007). Self-directed learning is a procedure in which adults figure out their learning needs, decide on goals, and determine resources for learning (Knowles, 1975). Based on the attributes of self-directed learning Kim, Olfman, Ryan, and Eryilmaz (2014) developed the following (Figure 1) to illustrate five tasks necessary for

self-directed learners. (Kim et al., 2014). Goal setting is a significant activity for self-directed learners (Knowles, 1975). The overarching premise of the Pathfinder program is for students to set goals. Participants in the Pathfinder program must submit a proposal

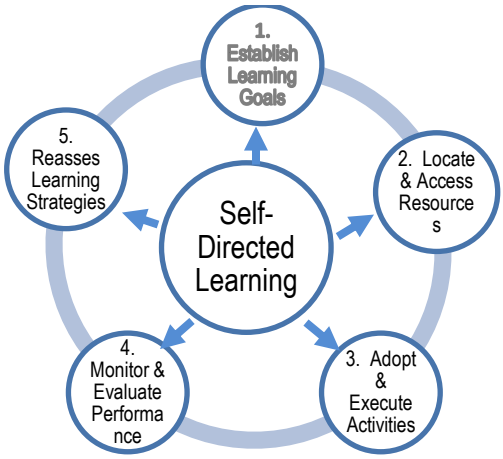

Figure 1. This figure illustrates the five learning tasks necessary to become a self-directed learner. From "Leveraging a Personalized System to Improve Self-directed Learning in Online Educational Environments," by R. Kim, L. Olfman, T. Ryan, E. Erylimaz, 2014, *Computers and Education*, 70, p. 101. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix C).

for their project. During the process of completing a project, participants independently complete the five tasks that are set forth by Kim et al. (2014). Data analysis of students who have independently developed a Pathfinder project may show whether these students are self-directed learners.

Hong, Haefner, and Slekar (2011) discussed the rationale behind self-directed

learning. This rationale was to prepare students to have the ability to be responsible for their own learning and behavior, and ability to be in control of their life (Hong et al., 2011). Knowles (1975) listed three reasons that self-directed learning was important. These reasons included; when adults take initiative they learn more and are more motivated, it is part of the maturation process, and the world is ever changing so adults must have inquiry skills (Knowles, 1975). Adult learning research has concluded that adults are able to pursue self-directed learning (Knowles et al., 2012). What is not known is whether self-directed learning is innate in adult learners, or if adult educators should assist learners to become self-directed.

English and Kitsantas (2013) defined self-directed learning as students taking part in learning that they specify, rather than ones instructors define. Inherent in this definition is motivation and the skills to be an independent learner (English & Kitsantas, 2013). Robertson (2011) professed that in order for students to be successful in college, they must develop skills to become self-directed learners. These skills included setting learning goals, assessing whether the learning goals are met, and re-planning depending on the assessment (Robertson, 2011). One of Knowles's (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) assumptions was that as adults grow, they change from a dependent learner to an independent one. Knowles (Merriam et al., 2007) also believed that learners are intrinsically motivated. Self-directed learning allows learners to play a larger part in the planning of the learning process (Czabanowska, Moust, Meijer, Schroder-Back, & Roebertsen, 2012). Learners who become self-directed continue their learning and become lifelong learners (Sibthorp et al., 2011). Sibthorp et al. (2011) reported that

literature indicated experiential learning activities can steer students towards becoming motivated to self-direct their learning.

Self-directed learning assumes that learners are intrinsically motivated (Knowles, 1974). Mega, Ronconi, and De Beni (2013) posited that students' emotions play a large part in self-directed learning and motivation. If emotions are positive, self-directed learning is furthered. The self-determination theory states that intrinsic motivation plays a role in self-directed learning (Guiffrida, Lynch, Wall, & Abel, 2013). Guiffrida, et al. (2013) stated that when three psychological needs are met, intrinsic motivation is promoted. These needs are autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Faculty needs to support students in their efforts to become self-directed. English and Katsantas (2013) stressed the importance of assisting students who continue to struggle. In order to help students become independent learners, PBL environment needs to promote self-regulated learning. Faculty members may understand and admit that they need to support students, but may not know how.

Experiential learning can ingrain a love of learning in students (Sibthorp et al., 2011). When students enjoy learning they often, become lifelong learners and are able to become self-directed learners (Sibthorp et al., 2011). English and Kitsantas (2013) explained that self-regulated learning is a requisite skill for effective learning. Sze-yeng and Hussain (2010) added that it is also a skill necessary for promoting life-long learning. Participants of the Pathfinder program are having difficulty independently developing a project. The goal of the Pathfinder program is for students to become independent learners. Many freshman come to college from a teacher-centered environment. It is a

difficult for students to make the transition to a student-centered environment. According to Warburton and Volet (2012) even the most successful students have a tough time making the conversion to self-directed learning. Becoming a self-directed learner and gaining experiences are great resources for learning (Merriam et al., 2007).

Du (2012) completed a pilot project to examine the use of study plans to promote self-directed learning skills. Reflective journals and study plans assist students to make sense of learning and increase critical thinking skills (Du, 2012). Critical thinking is an integral component of self-directed learning (Strong, Wynn, Irby, & Lindner 2013). Through this pilot study, Du (2012) concluded that self-directed learning could supplement programs. Additionally, there must be change on the part of the teacher and students (Du, 2012).

There are many reasons that students have not made the transition to self-directed learning. Some of these reasons are personal experiences, scholarship, and how well students know the subject matter might stand in the way of self-directedness (Du, 2012). Hains and Smith (2012) believed that because students did not want to take responsibility for their education, they transitioned slower or not at all. Sze-yeng and Hussain (2010) completed a study on self-directed learning and reported that there is a learning curve associated with self-directed learning. Students struggled in the beginning because they were outside of their comfort zone. This initial struggle showed that students needed help to make the transition to self-directed learning (Sze-yeng & Hussain, 2010).

Sibthorp et al. (2011) reported that literature indicated experiential learning activities can steer students towards becoming motivated to self-direct their learning.

Self-directed learning assumes that learners are motivated intrinsically (Knowles, 1975). Herman (2012) reported that intrinsic motivation assists students in focusing on growing their learning ability. The self-determination theory posits that intrinsic motivation contributes to learning (Guiffrida et al., 2013). This is important due to motivation being a possible factor why students are not developing projects for the Pathfinder program.

The self-determination theory states that three psychological needs foster intrinsic motivation, which are autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Guiffrida et al., 2013). The Pathfinder program allows students to independently choose a project that interests them. These independent projects tie in with the self-determination theory and further students' intrinsic motivation. Research indicated that students might need help with harnessing their motivation to learn (English & Kitsantas, 2013). Additionally, students are more motivated if they believe that their instructors trust their competence (Herman, 2012).

The UK formed a national council for learning outside of the classroom (Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, 2015). It is their belief that motivation is a major attribute for learning (CLOTC, 2015). If students are not motivated, their learning is not effective. CLOTC (2015) reported that learning outside of the classroom can be a great motivator.

Facilitating Self-Directed Learning

It is necessary for colleges to assist students who enter college without the skills necessary to be self-directed. Czbanowska et al. (2012) stated faculty promotion of students' self-directed learning is a key factor to enhancing autonomy. Robertson (2011)

believed that the instructor's role needed to be redefined as facilitator. Many faculty members believe that students come to college with the attributes necessary to be independent learners (Hong et al., 2011; English & Kitsantas, 2013). Students need support to move towards independence. Hong et al. (2011) stated that over time, students in classrooms with faculty who supported self-directed learning practices moved towards independence. During experiential learning, instructors become facilitators and mentors.

In a study completed by Douglass and Morris (2014), students' perceptions of faculty members' support included enthusiasm, advisement, and use of real-world experiences. When faculty members support students emotionally, it is instrumental in promoting students' multicultural awareness and social skills (Carson & Domangue, 2013). Faculty members who set high standards typically support their students to become successful (Douglas & Morris, 2014). Instructors need to foster reflection in students to promote learning through experiential projects (Liu & Olson, 2011). Lord et al. (2010) stated the importance of self-directed learning and the growth that is gained by adults who are autonomous learners.

Hiemstra (2013) believed that instructors needed to build on the self-directed learning ability of every learner. Students will not take responsibility for their own learning if instructors make all of the learning decisions (Hiemstra, 2013). In order to assist students with transitioning into self-directed learning, Hiemstra (2013) recommended the following instructor roles: "content resource, resource locator, interest simulator, positive attitude generator, creativity, and critical thinking stimulator and evaluation simulator" (pp. 25-26). Instructors teach how they were taught. To capitalize

on making changes to the way we teach, PDPs need to be implemented (Hiemstra, 2013).

Faculty members need to be aware of the characteristics of self-directed learning which includes motivation, reflection, and emotion (Lord et al., 2010; Mega et al., 2010; Carson & Domangue, 2013; Simons et al., 2013). The responsibility of becoming an autonomous learner falls on the student, but instructors have a vital role through their interactions with the students (Lord et al., 2010). In a survey of 105 institutions of higher education, Lambright and Alden (2012) reported that administrators and students believed that service learning was important. Faculty members are not always supportive of experiential learning. The research that was completed by Lambright and Alden (2012) was based on service learning that was embedded in coursework. It was reported that faculty members would support service learning if they had support from the institution (Lambright & Alden, 2012). The Pathfinder program offers faculty members a stipend to become a student sponsor.

All of the research reviewed, were studies based on experiential learning required for coursework. The gap in the literature is that the Pathfinder program projects are co-curricular. English and Kitsantas (2013) believed that in order for students to become independent learners they needed guidance from faculty. Participants in the Pathfinder program have a sponsor who is a full time faculty member of SPC. Some faculty members have volunteered to become sponsors. Alternately, students can ask a faculty member to become their sponsor. Some of the expectations of sponsors are: approval of the project proposal, track student progress during the project, and meet with the participant for the final reflection. In learning endeavors that are embedded in

courses, students are guided by the instructor of the class. Instructors become facilitators who contribute their expertise and experiences (Chan, 2010). In the co-curricular projects at SPC, participants only have a sponsor who is available a limited number of hours.

Implications

Experiential learning in higher education is on the rise (Bartolome, 2013; Robertson, 2011). At SPC, students are required to complete three projects in addition to their coursework. But students are having difficulty independently developing a project. This study examined why some students are able to independently develop a project. The data collected will assist SPC in defining what attributes students need to become self-directed learners. Preliminary research has revealed the lack of faculty knowledge about self-directed learning. Even though experiential learning is widespread in colleges, implementation is slow due to the lack of understanding by faculty (Ghose, 2010).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate why only 8% of students are successfully, independently developing projects for the Pathfinder program. Self-directed or independent learning is one of the goals of the Pathfinder program. This program is a unique program, whereby projects that are considered experiential learning are required outside of any academic classes. A literature review was completed, which illustrated a gap in the research. All research studies found were linked to programs that required experiential or service learning within college courses. This goal of this study was to determine what SPC can do to assist students to become self-directed learners.

Helping students become self-directed learners will facilitate students' success in independently creating their first project. Section 2 includes the proposed methodology for this study and the plan for data collection.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore what 8% of the freshman/sophomore students are doing to independently develop projects for the Pathfinder program. By collecting qualitative data, I could see how students viewed the process of project development.

Research Design and Approach

A qualitative methodology was used for data collection. Qualitative research is a way to examine real life experiences (Yin, 2011). Qualitative methodology is appealing because the researcher can study a wide range of topics and use common terms (Yin, 2011). One of the qualitative characteristics Creswell (2012) delineated was that of exploring and developing an understanding of a central phenomenon. In this study the central phenomenon was independently developed projects for the Pathfinder program.

Data in qualitative research is gathered to construct a theory, instead of starting with the theory as in quantitative research (Creswell, 2012). One type of research design is called case study. Case study is a detailed and thorough look at a process that is supported by data (Creswell, 2012) within a real-life setting (Yin, 2011). Case studies are often used in higher education (Harland, 2014). Harland (2014) reported that case studies usually address a problem of interest and in the setting where it occurs. Using case study methodology allowed the researcher to examine the phenomenon of independently developing projects and collect data at SPC.

Specifically, an instrumental case study was used. When a particular issue is

being studied, an instrumental case study can provide insight into a topic (Creswell, 2012). Instrumental case studies are used to assist in understanding the theory behind the issue, which is more significant than the actual issue (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The issue in this study was the small number of students who have been able to independently complete a project. The theory that supported the issue was self-directed learning. Through interviews and document analysis, information was gathered that may contribute to the understanding of how to successfully develop a project.

The guiding question that guided the study was: How does a select group of students at a small private college in the Southeast region of the United States describe their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project? Participants were interviewed and asked open-ended questions to in order to gain insight into the process of project development. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) stated that for case studies, interviews are a common way to collect qualitative data. One-on-one interviews are a favored method in qualitative research (Creswell, 2012). This type of interview was helpful in gaining knowledge about the participant's view of the process. Additionally, documents were analyzed. Written documents are a good source of data (Creswell, 2012). Written reflections are submitted at the culmination of the project. The purpose of these reflections was for the participants to focus on what they gained from the entire process. The Pathfinder program set forth guidelines for reflections. Participants will reflect on the project, if they met their goals, and what specific skills they used. These documents will be helpful in answering the guiding question: How do a select group of students at a small private college in the Southeast region of the United

States describe their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project.

For this study I used a qualitative case-study methodology to examine what determined students' success in independently developing projects for the Pathfinder Program. Little is known about the issue at SPC, which makes the qualitative methodology effective (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Qualitatively, I looked at the factors that affected this issue. A quantitative study would only look at a few variables (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Case study research allows the researcher to study the problem in depth and in the setting where it occurs (Sangster-Gormley, 2013). Qualitative research yields narrative data and is inductive. In contrast, quantitative research uses numbers and statistics to prove a hypothesis, and is deductive.

According to Hancock and Algozzine (2011) the main features of qualitative research are similar. However, there are distinctive differences between some types of qualitative research. Due to these differences, the other qualitative methodologies would not be a good fit for this study. The intrinsic case study would be one of the designs that would not be useable. Creswell (2012) stated that intrinsic case studies can be utilized if the study is unusual or of special interest. The research study that was completed was not unusual. The study examined students who have independently developed a project. Grounded theory research builds theory from the data (Yin, 2011). Case study research worked for this study because data was collected from students to find the meaning of a process through narrative description. A phenomenological study examines people's lived experiences to describe a phenomenon (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Another

design is the ethnographic study. The findings of ethnography are based on observations, and create a cultural picture (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Neither phenomenology nor ethnography would be appropriate for this study. These last two designs would not provide the descriptive data that is needed.

Case study was the best methodology for this study because it allowed an in-depth intense study of the phenomenon (Sangster-Gormley, 2013). The Pathfinder program is a bounded system. This means that it is bounded by time, setting, or participants (Yin, 2011). For this study, I chose SPC, and participants who have completed at least one Pathfinder project. Case study methods work well when the researcher is looking to find the how or why of a topic and are not limiting the study to specific variables (Yin, 2011). Case study uses many forms of collecting data (Harlan, 2014). The study was conducted using interviews and a review of documents.

Quantitative methodology was not chosen for this project, because a quantitative approach starts out with a hypothesis, focuses on the interaction of two variables, and quantifies data. Quantitative studies would not allow the researcher to obtain a deep narrative of participants' experiences. There are some similarities between quantitative and qualitative methodologies. They both allow the researcher to figure out what to study and ask questions to guide the research (Creswell, 2012). The data for quantitative research is analyzed using numbers and statistics, while qualitative data looks for common themes and reported in narrative form (Creswell, 2012).

Another characteristic difference between qualitative and quantitative methodologies is generalizability. Quantitative researchers are interested in generalizing

their results to comparable populations. Generalization is not an expected outcome of case studies. The reason is that researchers cannot duplicate the study. Case study is dependent on the specifics of time and place (Harland, 2014). Results from this case study may contribute to practices in adult education. The reader of research would determine if there was enough similarity to apply any findings.

Participants

The first step in selecting a sample is to identify the case, which is referred to as the bounded system (Yin, 2011). Participants who independently developed their project for the Pathfinder program were the case for this study. Purposeful sampling was used to choose participants to assist in examining a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012): the process of independently developing a project.

Since the participants have a similar trait, the sampling strategy was homogeneous. Homogeneous sampling is used when insight into a specific group is desired (Patton, 2001). At SPC, 75 (12% of enrollment) students have developed projects. Of that 75, only 53 have completed the project unaided. The other 22 have opted to complete an already proposed project. Interviewing all 53 students would have been overwhelming and time consuming. Mason (2010) believed that the sample size should be large enough to gain knowledge about the research question, but cautioned that if data starts to become repetitive we need to stop. Saturation guides the sample size (Mason, 2010). Interviews were held for seven participants, which created sufficient data to make sure that the research question is covered. Mason (2010) believed that if the sample was too big, the data becomes repetitious.

Walden University required IRB approval before any data could be collected. An application was submitted and approved, No. 05-06-15-0368836, it expires on May 5, 2016. SPC also had an IRB process which likewise was completed (approval number 151055). SPC stated that Walden University will be the IRB of record. SPC informed me that a consent form would not be needed from the gatekeeper. Access to participants was gained through the Pathfinder Committee Chair. The chair is what Creswell (2012) described as the gatekeeper. The gatekeeper helps identify participants (Creswell, 2012). As a colleague, the gatekeeper is familiar with the study and the data collection needs. I am not a part of the committee that instituted this program, nor do I owe any allegiance to this committee. Further, I do not know any of the students in the Pathfinder program and have not had any of them in my courses. The majority of the students that are in this program so far are from the main campus. I teach and oversee clinical courses and field experiences for the satellite campus.

In order to gain the most out of the interview process, I developed a protocol to help to establish a relationship with the participant (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). After introductions, I explained the purpose of the study, the amount of time the interview would be expected to last, and assured the participant that everything shared in the interview process would be kept confidential. Participants were reminded that the interview was voluntary and at any time they could decide not to participate. The student was then asked to read the informed consent form. Prior to signing the document, I inquired if the student had any questions. After all questions were answered the student was asked to sign the consent to participate in the interview and be audiotaped.

Additionally, the student was asked if a copy of their reflection document could be obtained, a signature reflected whether or not they consented. I then thanked the student for participating in the process and let them know that their input was valued. Student names were not used on interview transcriptions or documents used. It is important for the students to understand that they should be honest, and that nothing they say will be used in any way against them.

Participant Access

After gaining permission through the IRB process at Walden University and SPC, access to participants was gained through the chair of the Pathfinder program., who was considered the gatekeeper (Creswell, 2012). The gatekeeper identified the participants, who were then contacted by e-mail. A date and time convenient to the participant was set up. The gatekeeper was familiar with the study and data needs.

Role of the Researcher

Clarifying the researcher's role in qualitative methodology, helps to make the research credible (Unluer, 2012). I am a faculty member at the site where the research took place. We are a small institution and I am familiar with the faculty and staff. The advantage to being an insider is the familiarity of the inner workings of the institution (Unluer, 2012). Because the Pathfinder program was instituted in the fall of 2013, participants will be freshmen and sophomores. Additionally, these students are enrolled in a number of different major programs. I teach in the School of Education and students in my classes are typically juniors and seniors. I am not a member of the Pathfinder committee and I do not owe any allegiance to the committee.

I have been interested in learning by doing for a long time. I have a long and varied background that brought me to where I am today. When the Pathfinder program was instituted, I believed that it would benefit our students. In order to avoid bias, member checks were used. Member checking is when participants review the findings for accuracy (Creswell, 2012). Participants were afforded the opportunity to review the data from their interview. Interview transcripts were emailed to participants, through the Walden University email system. Participants were asked to review and verify the accuracy of the interview transcript. Member checks ensure accuracy and credibility (Lodico et al., 2010). Creswell (2012) suggested another way to minimize bias is to keep an eye on our perspectives by keeping a reflective journal.

Ethical Protection of Participants

In qualitative research, attention should be paid to three ethical issues (Lodico et al., 2010). These include, obtaining informed consent, protecting participants from harm, and ensuring confidentiality. Permission must be obtained from multiple levels (Creswell, 2012). The study proposal was submitted to the SPC's institutional IRB and Walden University's IRB for permission to conduct research. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. All participants needed to feel safe and they were assured that confidentiality would be maintained.

As a faculty member, access to the site was not an issue. An informed consent form was used so the participants understood the purpose of the study and received assurances of confidentiality. IRB applications were submitted to both Walden University and SPC. Once IRB approval was granted from both institutions, previously

identified students were sent an email requesting their voluntary participation in the project study . All email communication was completed through my Walden University email account. The interviews were set up at a time suitable to the participant.

Participants must be protected from harm (Lodico et al., 2010). Due to the type of research that was conducted, the extent of concern was low. Yin (2011) shared some strategies for protecting participants. These strategies included protecting the identities of participants, and treating participants with respect. All identities of the participants were kept confidential. Interview recordings, transcripts and documents were coded, and do have any names on them. Transcripts and documents are on a flash drive. The flash drive, any paper copies, and audio recordings are currently in a locked file drawer. I am in possession of the only key. After 5 years all paper documents will be shredded and electronic media will be erased.

Data Collection

Data collection for qualitative studies includes observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials (Creswell, 2012). This study used interviews and documents for data collection. Interviews are a common method for data collection (Creswell, 2012). There are advantages and disadvantages to the interview process (Creswell, 2012). The interview process elicits more specific information than an observation would produce. Researchers can ask open-ended questions, which will yield specific data. A disadvantage might be that the participant answers a question with what he believes the researcher wants to hear. There is always the possibility of equipment failure during the interview. This may render the interview unusable, if there were not

sufficient notes taken during the interview. Notes were taken during the interviews, in case there was a problem with the audio. This did not occur. The audio recorder worked well during the interviews. All audio tapes were clear and concise. Since I was researching why some students were successful in independently developing projects, interviewing the students allowed for optimal data collection. Using semi-structured interview questions allowed some flexibility in obtaining specific information from the participants (Merriam, 2009).

Document analysis was a beneficial way to obtain qualitative data. According to Creswell (2012) documents provide data that is written by the participants. The participants in the Pathfinder program write a reflection as part of the project requirement. These reflections capture the students' thoughts and feelings about the process. These reflection documents were available, and permission from the students was obtained.

Observations are another data collection method. For this study, observations would not align with the research question. Participants independently developing a project would not be conducive to observation. Rubin and Rubin (2012) defined focus groups as an evaluative process where groups of participants gather to discuss issues. Since participant confidentiality was not possible, focus groups were not be used.

Interviews

Rubin and Rubin (2012) described interviews as a conversation that has more detail and depth. A semi-structured interview was used. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, questions that can be more or less

structured, and no particular order. Once IRB approval was obtained, potential participants were sent an email through the Walden University's secure network. One-on-one interviews took place on the campus that the participants attended. A room was reserved on the third floor of the library where we had privacy. These interviews were scheduled at the students' convenience and lasted approximately 60 minutes. The data collection for the interview process lasted 3 weeks.

I conducted the interviews. It is important to have good listening skills (Yin, 2011). Listening is more than just the audible sound from the participants. Researchers need to be able to hear between the lines (Yin, 2011). An interview protocol was utilized (Appendix B). Interview protocols assist the interviewer with organizing the interview and allowing for note taking. The interviews were audio taped in addition to taking notes. All tapes and notes are being kept in a locked cabinet. Interviews began with an introduction to the purpose of the study, confidentiality of the data, and the approximate time the interview will last (Creswell, 2012). Participants read and were asked to sign the informed consent form.

Interview questions were open-ended which allowed for the participants to express their thoughts and perceptions (Creswell, 2012). In addition, asking good questions yielded the best data (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011). Merriam (2009) listed four types of questions to avoid, multiple questions, leading questions, and yes or no questions.

Documents

Documents represent another method of collecting qualitative data. Participants

write a reflection paper after completion of their project. With permission from the participants these documents were available for use in this study. The informed consent has a statement asking for permission to access these reflections. The advantage to using documents is they are in the student's own words and the reflections are ready for analysis (Creswell, 2012). Once permission was granted, documents were forwarded to me through my Walden University email account. All names were redacted and coded with a letter. All copies of these documents are currently being kept in a locked cabinet.

Data Collection and Storage

Merriam (2009) stated the importance of having a system for handling data. This would include tagging and storage of data. Interviews were recorded with permission from the participant. Using a recording allows the researcher to be an active listener and to respond to the interviewee without having to take notes (Stukey, 2014). Interview notes were also taken. Writing interview notes helps interviewers focus on the main points and allows for a backup if there is an audio problem (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These recordings were labeled and then transcribed by an outside party.

Transcription of interviews is a laborious process. According to Creswell (2012) a one hour interview takes four hours to transcribe. It is up to the researcher to decide whether to complete the transcription or use the services of a transcriptionist (Creswell, 2012). Transcript quality could be affected by how skilled the transcriptionist is (Mero-Jaffe, 2011). All transcripts were reviewed and compared to the recordings. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated differing views on transcription processes. Voice recognition

software is not viable because it does not recognize multiple voices (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Although Rubin and Rubin (2012) do not have a recommendation, they stated that when researchers transcribe interviews it helps with preparation for successive interviews.

A confidentiality agreement was obtained from the transcriptionist. All recordings and interview notes that were taken during the interview were labeled with a letter to protect the confidentiality of the participant. It was important to make sure that the transcription was accurate because this would affect the data analysis (Stuckey, 2014). Once the interviews were transcribed, I listened to the interviews to check for accuracy of the transcript. All recordings, transcripts, and interview notes are currently being stored in a locked cabinet in my home office.

Data collection and analysis was concurrent (Merriam, 2009). After obtaining each interview transcript, I began to manually code and started to develop themes. Merriam (2009) defined coding as notations on the data to make it easier to organize and retrieve the data. The same was completed with the documents. All were assigned a letter to insure confidentiality. All data is being kept in a locked file for the required five years before being destroyed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing procedure. Rereading of interview transcripts and field notes was completed to become more familiar with the data (Yin, 2011). Creswell (2012) recommended completing a preliminary data analysis. This was accomplished by looking at the data to get an overall sense of the data. Coding was completed manually.

As I read and reread the transcript, words and word segments were underlined. A color coding system was used. For example, phrases related to goal setting were highlighted in blue. The transcript had a wide margin in which to write ideas. According to Merriam (2009) coding these segments is the beginning of constructing categories. Categories included, goal setting, previous experience, motivation etc. Initially, I coded any segments that seemed relevant. This type of coding is referred to as open coding (Merriam, 2009).

After I finished underlining and writing notes in the margin, I wrote a list of the categories and themes, and attached it to the document as recommended (Merriam, 2009). This procedure was continued for each interview. The list from each interview was placed in a master document for comparative purposes. The coded data themes that emerged were the essence of qualitative analysis (Creswell, 2012). The same process was completed with the reflection documents. The coding of interviews and documents were separate.

Accuracy and Credibility

Creswell (2012) discussed the importance of validating qualitative research. By validating the data, I ensured accuracy of my report. One strategy is triangulation. Triangulation is defined as authenticating data from all participants (Creswell, 2012). Collecting data through interviews and document review allowed the researcher to associate the data. This association assisted in the validity of the data. Data triangulation assures that data was impartial (Jui-Long, Yu-Chang, & Rice, 2012). All data collected was crosschecked for accuracy and consistency. Recordings of interviews were listened

to and checked with the transcription for accuracy. Documents were also reviewed for consistency.

Lodico et al. (2010) posited that field notes and reflective journals helped control any researcher biases. An ongoing record of my interaction with the data is recommended (Merriam, 2009). I kept a reflection journal to note any biases that I might have during the process. There were not any biases to report. The journal and field notes assisted in limiting any inexactness in the interpretation of data.

Another strategy to ensure validity and reduce researcher bias is member checking (Lodico et al., 2010). Harper and Cole (2012) defined member checking as a quality control process whereby participants have the opportunity to review their transcript correctness. Participants received a copy of the interview transcript via email, and were asked to verify the accuracy of the transcript. Using member checks is one of the ways that accuracy of the interviews can be assured (Harper & Cole, 2012). Mero-Jaffe (2011) believed that member checking has a twofold purpose. One was research ethics and the other was validating the interview. There were not any inaccuracies reported by the participants.

Limitations

The proposed number of interview participants was 10. Walden University's IRB recommended that I receive a list with more than 10 names because we cannot assume that everyone that is invited will agree to attend. IRB approval was received at the end of SPC's school semester, after students had already left the campus. The initial participant request email was sent to 20 eligible participants. Eligible participants were those

students who independently developed their project for the Pathfinder program. Two follow up emails were sent. A total of seven participants responded and were interviewed. The data gathered from the seven participants became repetitive. When data becomes repetitive, saturation is reached (Marshall, Cordon, Poddar, & Fonetnot, 2013).

Participants signed consent forms to allow the researcher to review documents. These documents were a précis and a reflection document. The précis is a 150-word description of their project which is included in their Experiential Learning Transcript. Out of the seven participants, four submitted both documents, two submitted their précis only, and one did not forward any documents. This is a limitation because I was unable to obtain saturation.

Data Analysis Results

Data collection was accomplished through interviews and document analysis. These two methods were utilized to gain insight into how some students were able to complete an independent Pathfinder program project. Analysis of case study research commonly correlates to a better understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2011). The research question that guided the study was, How does a select group of students at a small private college in the Southeast region of the United States describe their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project?

Coding Process

Seven participants were interviewed. All participants gave consent to be audio taped. Additionally, they were informed that the audio tape would be transcribed by an

outside party who has signed a confidentiality agreement. The last signature line on the consent form allowed me to obtain a copy of the post project documentation. The audio tape was uploaded to the cloud and the transcriber returned the transcripts within 24 hours. I then listened to the audio as I read the transcripts to insure accuracy of the transcripts. The transcripts were sent to each participant for review. No discrepancies were received.

Coding was completed manually. Saldana (2013) suggested that novice researchers code on paper rather than utilizing computer software. The act of working with data by hand allows for increased ownership of the study (Saldana, 2013). I initially read the data to get an overall sense of the data. Transcripts were read and reread. Words and phrases that related to the research question were underlined using a color coding system. Notes were written in the margin. After each transcript was coded, I wrote a list of codes and themes and attached them to the document. Once all of the interviews were coded, the list of codes and themes were placed in one document. Grouping related codes together allowed for the development of themes. For example, participants were asked what abilities they possessed that made them successful in independently proposing their first project. Words and phrases included organizational skills, leadership skills, time management, etc. Five themes emerged from the coded phrases. They were characteristics, self-motivation, lack of assistance received, personal gain, and advice for others. Table 2 illustrates the themes that developed from code words and phrases.

Once all of the interviews were coded, I collected the post project documents. By analyzing two different data sources, I am able to increase the accuracy and validity

of the study. The coding for the written documents was completed in the same way as

Table 2

Codes and Themes - Interviews

Codes	Themes
Independent, proactive, organizational skills, time management skills, planner, strong willed, leadership skills, preparation	Characteristics
Furthering of career, passion, thinking ahead, getting their name into the community, personal gain	Self-motivation
No help received, very little help, some pointers only, during project some verbal encouragement, checked in but not required to, occasionally asked how it was going	Assistance with proposal/ assistance during project
Humbled, rewarding, knowledge of community, information about future career, reaffirm confidence, stepped outside comfort zone, completed something meaningful, leadership skills, long term goal setting	Personal gain
Find your passion, be creative, do not procrastinate, start now, think about future, just do it, great experience	Advice

the interview transcripts. Pertinent words and phrases were highlighted, and notes were written in the margin. Three themes emerged from the document analysis. These were personal gain, characteristics, and goal setting. Personal gain and characteristics were themes that were common to the interview themes reported. Goal setting was not a theme identified in the interview analysis. Any data that illustrated a different theme was reported as discrepant data.

Findings

Interviews were conducted. Seven students who have completed at least one Pathfinder program project agreed to participate in this study. Interviews were scheduled On a date and time selected by the participants. A consent form that was approved by Walden IRB and SPC IRB was signed by the participants. This consent included permission to audio tape the interview, and retrieve reflection documents. Transcription of the interviews was completed by an outside party who signed a confidentiality agreement. I subsequently listened to the audio tape to compare it with the transcripts for accuracy. Coding was completed manually. Five themes emerged: characteristics, self-motivation, assistance with proposal/assistance during project, personal gain, and advice.

Characteristics. The first theme that emerged from the coded words was characteristics. The participants shared specific attributes they possessed that assisted then with independently proposing their first project. The coded phrases for this theme were: independent, proactive, organizational skills, time management skills, planner, strong willed, leadership skills, and preparation.

Participants expressed that they were independent and proactive. The phrase "not a procrastinator" was used five times. Not having to rely on others was important to Participant A. Participant C stated, "I think I'm pretty independent. I do not like to wait. It's just something I would rather go through and get done." Participant D stated, "I'm always one step ahead, or at least I try to be. As soon as I came to SPC and heard about it, I knew that I needed to get started on this right now so I don't get hung up on it." Participant B declared, "I would say just being strong-willed, and wanting to stay on top

of things."

To independently develop a proposal participants shared that their organizational, planning, and time management skills were invaluable. Six of the participants stated that they were planners and had good organizational skills. Participant F said, "I'm very organized, maybe too organized. I want to get things done and out of the way and off my to-do list." Participant E stated, "I'm a planer. I plan a lot, and I make sure I have everything in order before I do start anything. So that helped a lot with me getting my project rolling." Her particular strategy was to take it to pen and paper, and plan it out. Time management skills were useful for Participant B. She stated, "I set deadlines so that I would make sure my proposal got submitted, and that all pieces of my project were completed in a timely manner. Participant G stated, "My organizational skills assisted me with proposing and fulfilling my project requirements. I utilized folders and notes so I would not get overwhelmed. I believe that if you are not organized you might quit."

Participant B spoke about completing her project with another student. They both completed their own proposals, but Participant B took a leadership role. "By taking the leadership role I could make sure that tasks and communication were accomplished by the day of the event" stated Participant B. Participant C also stated, "I became the leader because I was ready to get it going and get it done." Leadership characteristics reported by the participants were good communication skills, able to delegate, and commitment to the project.

Self-motivation. The second theme was self-motivation. Furthering of career, passion, thinking ahead, getting their name into the community, and personal gain were

coded. Participant A proposed her project in order to secure a position. "It was an audition of sorts, to prove I was capable of handling it." Participant A went on to say "My motivation was personal gain, and it did lead to the job." Thinking ahead towards graduating early was the motivation for Participant D. She stated, "I've had this whole plan to graduate early since I've come to college, I needed to get started in order to graduate in 3 years." All participants stated that they were motivated to propose their first project when they would have more time to complete them. They felt that their junior and senior years at school would be more hectic.

Motivation for Participant E came in the form of passion. Participant E stated, "Experiences in my own life kind of led me to point in a certain direction, helping others." Passion also motivated Participant C to propose her first project. Participant C noted, "I was doing a project with an organization that I was actually passionate about and that helped." She added, "If you're doing something you don't care about, you're not really going to do it." Getting her name out in the community was key in motivating Participant B. As a nursing student "I could get in touch with the community, get in touch with doctor's offices and local organizations to help my career in the future." Participant G was also motivated by his career. Participant G stated, "As a nursing student I was interested in the inner workings of a blood drive."

Assistance received. The third theme was assistance received. This was a two part theme, assistance received in the proposal stage, and assistance received during the project. While writing their proposal five participants stated that they did not receive any help. One participant shared that they received some pointers from the sponsor, and one

received a little bit of guidance from the sponsor. Participant D admitted, "Once I knew about the program, I came up with the idea, I sort of put two and two together. The proposal for me was probably the easy part of the process." Participant A was able to develop a project proposal based on an event that happens every summer. "I did not receive any help with my proposal" said Participant A. The participants that did not receive any assistance with their proposal also reported that they did not request any help from their sponsors. The Pathfinder program spells out the expectations of sponsors. In regards to the development of the proposal, the expectation is that sponsors are to assist the student if necessary.

During the project, the participants reported very little sponsor interaction. Participant A expressed, "I was not required by my sponsor to check in at any particular point". She completed the checklist that she had compiled and when she would check off a task she let him know about it. Participant F shared, "although I was not required to by my sponsor, I checked in with the sponsor weekly to discuss my progress. Participant D stated, "I felt completely alone and would have liked to have someone to talk to." Occasionally her sponsor would email to check in. D decided, "It just came down to me being more proactive and asking for help, but it wasn't necessarily freely given." One participant (B) responded, "I received verbal encouragement and ideas rather than actually getting help."

Personal gain. Participants reported varying personal gain (theme 4) from conducting their independently developed Pathfinder program project. All participants communicated how deeply they were impacted by their project. Respondents used the

terms, humbled, rewarding, knowledge of community, information about future career, reaffirm confidence, stepped outside comfort zone, completed something meaningful, long term goal setting, and leadership skills. Participant C focused on how her project improved her personally. Participant C stated, "I really think it helped me to be more organized and timely, and just better at planning things." Participant D noted, "I think my leadership experience was definitely very helpful. I think one of the major things it did for me was just sort of reaffirm my confidence in myself." She added that this skill set will be valuable to her as she transitions into the real world. "I guess just a sense of humbleness", was how Participant A described her gain from the project she conducted.

Stepping outside of her comfort zone was difficult, but Participant E felt that she benefited from the experience because, "It put me in a place socially that I was not comfortable with." Participant E stated, "Pathfinder projects are not easy, I realized that, that by completing my first project I proved to myself that I can do anything I set out to do. Participant G realized, "How important long term goal setting was." Participant B was in awe of the amount of resources within the community. She got her name out there, and gained information about her future nursing career.

Advice. The last theme was advice. Four of the participants have or are in the process of completing their second project. The other three have completed one project. All participants used the terms, find your passion, be creative, do not procrastinate, start now, think about the future, just do it, and great experience. Participant C advised, "Just try and find something that they really care about. If you come up with it yourself and you knew it was something that you had been passionate about, you will feel

accomplished when it is completed." Participant C shared, "Having completed one project does not make it easier to propose a second one." She added that it would be helpful to speak with other students who have completed a project. Participant D stated, "If I was going to talk to other students, I would tell them to be proactive. It is a silly game to wait for a project to fall in your lap." She would encourage students to think about their future and find something they were passionate about.

Participant E stated, "Students need to make sure that it is personal to them, if they don't it will become a burden." "Don't wait until the last minute," was the advice offered by Participant B. She added, "It may seem overwhelming, it is a great experience and it is something that you can learn from. I think it's something that they need to talk to someone about before they fully go in to it." Participant A advised students to complete two projects before their junior year. Be creative and think outside the box. She stated that while proposing her second project, other students were asking her for pointers and help with their project.

Document Analysis

Documents were collected and analyzed in order to gain deeper understanding about the themes that arose from analysis of interview data. Prior to the interview, participants were asked if they would be willing to submit their post project documents. All participants agreed and signed the statement on the consent form allowing use of the documents for this research study. Documents included reflection documents and a précis. The précis is a 150-word description of their project which is included in their Experiential Learning Transcript. Four participants submitted both documents, two

submitted their précis only, and one did not forward any documents. This is a limitation of the study because saturation of data was not reached. Glesne (2015) reported that documents are normally used to support or dispute data from interviews.

The précis is required documentation that is submitted to the registrar. The reflections are turned in to the sponsors and discussed. When I asked the students for their reflection documents, two of them stated that they did not complete the reflection piece. They added that their sponsors did not require them to hand those in. Reflections are a requirement of the Pathfinder program. The Pathfinder program requirements include a list of sponsor expectations. One of the expectations states that sponsors will meet with each student for final reflection. Inconsistency between sponsors was a phrase included in the interview data analysis. Reflection is imperative in order to build new knowledge (Chan, 2012).

The coding for the written documents was completed in the same way as the interview transcripts. I completed an initial read through of the documents. On subsequent readings pertinent words and phrases were highlighted, and notes were written in the margin.

The themes that emerged from the coding were goal-setting and personal gain. Having received documents from six participants, the themes were very specific and personal for each of them. There was some overlap with themes and phrases communicated during the interview process. For example, goal setting was not a theme identified while coding interviews, but Participant D shared that "she set a goal to graduate early." Participant G stated, "my goal was to complete all three projects before

I reached my junior year." Personal gain was a theme that emerged during the coding of interviews and the coding of documents.

Personal gain. Personal gain was a theme that emerged in the documentation and the interview process. Participant A honed her leadership skills. Participant B gained a better understanding of healthcare related jobs. Two participants felt that they had participated in a project that was personally meaningful to them. Participant F stated that she personally benefitted from her project because it taught her about her future career. Three of the participants stepped outside of their comfort zone and gained confidence. Participant E reflected, "I met many of my personal goals as well as some I had not originally planned on, however the main one was being able to work with and fully understand individuals with developmental disabilities." A statement written by Participant E concluded that her project was an excellent learning experience. She believed that these projects enhance learning and the overall college experience.

Discrepant Data

While data is being analyzed, there may be some information that does not have anything in common with the rest of the data. These are called discrepant cases. Discrepant case analysis is another strategy that assists in increasing the credibility of the study (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) suggested that by looking for discrepant or negative data, and not finding any, actually increased confidence in the data. While analyzing the data I looked for any data that was different or contradictory to any of the emerging themes. Any discrepant data that I discovered was reported separately.

One of the themes that emerged from the document analysis was goal setting.

Goal setting was not a theme that emerged during the analysis of the interview data. Any data that is not consistent with the rest is considered discrepant data and is reported as such. The discrepant data may be due the lack of saturation of document data.

The theme of goal setting emerged from the coding of available documents. Words and phrases were, positive and memorable, connect with children, fix problems, work on leadership, and work with individuals with developmental disabilities. Goal setting is a part of being an independent learner. Six participants reported on the goals that they set for their project. Participant A wrote, "My goal was to take something positive and memorable from the experience." Participant A reported that this was accomplished by affecting children, parents, and faculty during her project. "Expanding knowledge and getting engaged with the community," was the goal set by Participant B. Setting a goal to connect with children and excite them about learning was a goal set by Participant F. Five documents included a goal of furthering leadership skills.

Summary

The research question that guided this study was, How does a select group of students at a small private college in the Southeast region of the United States describe their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project? Five themes emerged from the data collected during the interview process. The themes were: characteristics, self-motivation, assistance with proposal/assistance during project, personal gain, and advice. Knowles (1975) described independent learners as goal setters, motivated, and self-directed, which was the way that participants described themselves.

The participants in this study described their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder project. Goal setting which is a characteristic students who are independent learners was a theme that emerged from coding the documents. This correlates with the characteristics and self-motivation themes that emerged during the interview data analysis. The participants described themselves as independent learners who are able to be proactive in their endeavors. It was also described by the participants that they did not receive any (or very little) assistance from their sponsors.

Data were collected from participants who have completed one or more independently developed Pathfinder projects. Participants described themselves as independent, leaders, and planners. These are all characteristics of independent learners. One particular theme related to sponsors. Participants received very little if any assistance during the proposal writing of their project, and very little if any during the project itself. Participant D stated, "It just came down to me being more proactive and asking for help". Students who are not self-directed would need assistance with the proposal writing and guidance during the project. Sponsors may not realize that students need help or may not know how to help.

The problem is that only a small number of students have independently developed their first project. Students need support to move towards independence. A PDP was developed to provide sponsors with an understanding of how to assist students who are transitioning into independent learners. The 3-day PDP was designed to furnish sponsors with the tools and strategies they to need help students be successful with their Pathfinder project.

This section described the research methodology that was used for this project study. A qualitative case study was conducted to investigate how a select group of students described their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder project. Sample size and selection of participants was identified. Data collected included, one-on-one interviews, and document analysis. Interviews were audio recorded and were transcribed by an outside party. I listened to the audio tapes and checked the transcription for errors. Member checking was also used. Coding was completed manually. Section 2 also included a discussion of analyzing data and strategies for credibility. Based on the data, a 3-day professional development plan was developed to assist faculty and staff in their role as sponsors. Section 3 will be a description of the project.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The intent of this project study was to explore how students described their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder project. Interviews and documents were analyzed. The themes that emerged from the documents and interviews were: characteristics, self-motivation, assistance with their proposal/project, personal gain, goal setting, and advice. The participants were self-motivated, which aligns with self-directed learning. Participants reported receiving little or no assistance from their sponsors. One participant, who completed two projects, discussed the inconsistency from one sponsor to the other. Participants described themselves as being independent and goal oriented. These characteristics are indicative of self-directed learning. Students who are not self-directed need assistance from their sponsor. Data analysis illustrated that participants were receiving little if any assistance from their sponsor. After analysis of the interviews and documents, a PDP (Appendix A) was developed for sponsors in the Pathfinder program. Full-time faculty and staff are eligible to become sponsors. The PDP will assist sponsors with facilitating Pathfinder program projects. This section includes a description of the project, rationale, literature review, and information specific to the PDP.

Description and Goals

This study explored how students described their ability to independently develop a Pathfinder program project. The research question that guided this study was: How does a select group of students at a small private college in the Southeast region of the

United States describe their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project? Since participants described themselves as self-motivated and independent learners, they were able to complete their projects with little or no assistance from their sponsor. Participant A stated, "I did not receive any assistance, I would finish a checkpoint off of a list and clear it with him." Participant D shared, "I wouldn't say during the development of my project I received that much, I came up with the idea and put two and two together. During the project, I didn't receive assistance."

The PDP is intended to help sponsors gain an understanding of what their role is in helping students propose and complete their projects. According to the Pathfinder compact (2014), sponsors are available to provide ongoing support. Sponsors may realize that they need to support students, but may not know how. Becoming a sponsor is voluntary and is open to all full-time faculty and staff. Although not part of the study, academic advisors are a pertinent part of the Pathfinder program. It is their responsibility to familiarize students with the program and monitor their progress. The PDP is a 3- day training that will be offered to faculty, staff and academic advisors.

The problem identified in Section 1 was that only a small number of students have independently developed their first project. Many freshman come to college from a teacher-centered environment. It is difficult for many students to make the transition to a student-centered environment. The Pathfinder program is co-curricular, so the only assistance students receive is from their sponsor. The data illustrated that very little assistance was received from project sponsors. When asked if Participant E had received any assistance with her proposal, she answered, "I received a little bit from my sponsor."

As a follow-up I asked her if she received assistance from her sponsor during her project, she stated "Not on my project, but she checked in on me." Participant B shared, "As far as writing the proposal, I was handed the form, wrote it myself, and sent it in. During the project, I received some verbal encouragement." PDP addresses how to help students make the transition to self-directed, independent learning. Mentoring and coaching is an integral part of the PDP. Additionally the PDP includes the importance of reflection to promote learning through their experiential projects (Liu & Olson, 2011).

The project (Appendix A) contains all materials needed for the 3-day PDP. The PDP will be offered to faculty members and staff. The materials include: PowerPoint presentations, hour-by-hour detail, handouts, activities, and evaluations. The goal of the training is to present sponsors with the tools that they need to successfully guide students through the process of independently conduct a Pathfinder project.

Rationale

The study examined why some students were able to independently propose and complete at least one Pathfinder project. Prior to the data collection, I considered a peer mentoring plan or possibly a curriculum plan for freshman to help them become more self-directed. After the data collection and analysis, the major finding was that students were receiving little or no assistance from their sponsors. One participant who had completed two projects reported a lack of consistency between sponsors. Participant E had completed two projects and shared, "The second sponsor was not into it as the other one was, and was not as dedicated to the project." By choosing a PDP, sponsors will understand how to guide students through the process of completing a Pathfinder

program project.

The PDP includes information on mentoring, coaching, and self-directed learning. Positive outcomes of successful faculty development are connected with the use of several instructional methods (Steinert, Naismith, & Mann, 2012). The instructional methods included in the project are: lecture, collaborative groups, discussion, role playing, and sharing of experiences. Because the data showed that sponsors were not assisting students with their project, this PDP may help to address the problem stated in Section 1. The PDP may increase sponsor awareness of how to assist students with their Pathfinder project, and facilitate self-directed learning.

Review of the Literature

The literature review for this study used the following databases: Google Scholar, ERIC, and SAGE journals. ProQuest Dissertation database was also used to search for recent dissertations on experiential or self-directed learning. The following terms were used for online searches, *professional development*, *constructivism*, *instructional strategies, Mentor, coaching, instructional strategies for faculty, active learning and adult learner.*

All faculty and staff are eligible to volunteer as sponsors for the Pathfinder program. The PDP will be offered to all faculty and staff. This group of participants is heterogeneous, possessing a wide range of educational levels and content areas. Using adult learning methods allows all participants to be successful during the PDP. Estepp, Roberts, and Carter (2012) stated that PDPs should be relevant, and focused on the learner. The emphasis of the literature review will include: conceptual framework, adult

learners, and PDPs. There is limited literature on professional development for faculty and staff of co-curricular programs. Generally, the process of professional development will be identical and participants may gain strategies that they will also be able to use in their own classrooms.

Constructivism

To insure positive outcomes, professional development must be grounded in theory (Steinert, 2012). The theoretical framework for the PDP is constructivism. The constructivism theory asserts that adults learn by constructing meaning from their experiences. There are many definitions of constructivism, Patton, Parker, and Neutzline (2012) view it as an activity to be completed by learners. Estepp et al. (2012) discussed that in order for learning to take place, learners need to be involved in the learning process. Educators need to furnish learners with multiple chances to acquire knowledge (Patton et al., 2012). During the PDP participants will be afforded many opportunities to collaborate, participate in discussion, share experiences, and reflect.

Faculty and staff attending the PDP come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Social constructivism stresses active and social learning (Patel, Gali, Patel, & Parmar, 2011). According to Patel et al. (2011) collaboration is the best strategy for learning. Chitanana (2012) posited that when individuals communicate with their peers to share experiences and solve a task, learning will occur. Some of the participants will have already sponsored students in the Pathfinder program, while others have not yet become sponsors. The sharing of experiences by faculty and staff during the PDP increases the likelihood of positive learning outcomes.

Duslak and McGill (2014) stated that professionals attending workshops need to build knowledge and skills. This article was specifically aimed at advisor training, but as the authors explained it is valuable for other professions that appreciate relationships, such as teaching. Experiential learning activities are a significant piece of PDP's (Duslak & McGill, 2014). The 3-day proposed PDP includes collaborative opportunities, and role playing. Experiential learning is the best way for participants to obtain skills, instead of just information (Duslak & McGill, 2014).

In contrast, cognitive constructionism is focused on the individual and how he constructs knowledge. Individuals interact with the environment and construct knowledge through their experiences (Estepp et al., 2012). It was believed by Estepp et al. (2012) that experiences are an integral part of constructivism. Chitanana (2012) stated that training needed to include activities that increase learner participation, which in turn will further learning. Problem solving and discussion will be an integral part of the PDP.

Singh and Rajput (2013) wrote an article on constructivism which included a thorough explanation of constructivism and five stages for planning lessons. They call constructivism a theory that pulls out a myriad of teaching strategies which include inquiry learning and cooperative learning. The five stages include: engaging participants, exploring the tasks, discussion by the participants about what they learned, elaborate the concept, and evaluate (Singh & Rajput, 2013). The PDP is based on the constructivist framework and will allow participants to reflect on their own experiences.

Reflection is a major part of any experiential learning experience (Estepp, et.al.,

2012). Journals will be given to all participants, and at the end of each day they will be instructed to reflect on the day's instruction and activities. Reflection is not just rehashing what occurred during the day. Reflection is to look at what information has already been acquired and adding the new to it to create new meaning (Paterson & Chapman, 2013).

The instructor's role in self-directed learning is to encourage motivation and facilitate learning through feedback and guidance (English & Kitsntas, 2013). The Pathfinder program is a great opportunity for learners to control their own learning. Facilitators in a constructivist environment challenge and guide students towards becoming self-directed learners (Sze-yeng, & Hussain, 2010). Students may be at different levels of self-directedness (Benvenuti, 2012). The 3-day PDP will include the benefits of self-directed learning, why it is important, and the Pathfinder program and self-directed learning.

Adult Learning

The data from this project illustrated a need for sponsors to assist students with proposals and projects for the Pathfinder program. Sponsors in the Pathfinder program come from differing backgrounds, content, and instructional knowledge. The PDP was developed based on the analysis of the data collected and is aligned with adult learning theory. Knowles's theory of andragogy assumed that: adults want to know why they have to learn something, adults are self-directing, their experiences are important, and adults are intrinsically motivated (Knowles et al., 2012). Beavers (2011) stated that adult learners want to problem solve and build communities with their colleagues.

In a White Paper on professional development, Graner, Ault, Mellar, and Gingerich (2012) stated that three principles of adult learning should guide professional development. The first one is willingness to learn and motivation. Adults appreciate real life learning. Their motivation for attending PDPs is whether or not it is connected to their role at their institution (Graner et al., 2012). The second principle is sense-making. Adult learners need to internalize new material and personalize it. Use of reflection has proven to be an effective practice in PDP (Graner et al., 2012). Lastly, PDPs must have a content focus and recognize the knowledge of the participants.

Dunst and Trivette (2012) completed a review of 58 research studies of four adult learning methods. They examined these studies to determine which methods produced optimal learner outcomes. The four methods studied were accelerated learning, coaching, guided design and just-in-time-training (Dunst & Trivette, 2012). The analysis of adult learning methods, illustrated that when learners are actively involved in the process of learning there was an increase in learner knowledge, skills, attitudes and self-efficacy. The study also showed that when multiple practices were utilized in conjunction with less than 40 participants, learning was optimized. In their education design principles, Myers et al. (2014) included a variety of strategies incorporating adult learning theory.
The PDP (Appendix A) that was developed has multiple strategies to involve the participants in their own learning. These strategies include collaborative learning, role playing, discussion, and activities.

Using brief lectures and activities that involve participants will produce better learning outcomes (Johnson, 2011). In a study conducted by Lucas, Testman, Hoyland,

Kimble, and Euler (2013) they changed one of their pharmacology courses from lecture based to discussion based active learning. They reported that instituting active-learning methods such as defining student participation, involving students in the process, and evaluation of their participation is imperative. The data illustrated that active learning strategies helped to promote critical thinking and problem solving (Lucas et al., 2013). Active learning strategies engage participants; increase transfer of learning, and improves retention of course material (Lucas et al., 2013).

The PDP was developed to help sponsors effectively assist students with their Pathfinder projects. Using active learning strategies which include the experiences and orientation of the sponsors greatly increases learning (Strangfeld, 2013). In designing a 3-day PDP Myers et al. (2014) stated that adult learning theory needs to be integrated into all sessions. These included groups, and activities that were hands on. Participants will have the opportunity to actively explore different approaches to assisting students with their Pathfinder projects. Lucas et al. (2013) concluded that using active learning instead of straight lecture strengthened retention of content.

Professional Development

There are many definitions of professional development. According to Steinert et al. (2012) professional development is any action taken by an institution to refresh or help faculty in their roles. Graner et al. (2010) believed that professional development was an ongoing process to enhance skills. The PDP that was developed will assist faculty and staff who are or will become sponsors in the Pathfinder program. According to Beavers (2011) professional development is a widely accepted method for faculty

collaboration and instruction. Faculty development may lead to satisfaction by participants, and changes in behaviors, and knowledge (Madan, Hawa, Ballon, Silver, & Bernstein, 2012).

The research question for this project study asked how a group of students described their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project. The data analysis showed that these students were self-directed and motivated learners. Additionally, sponsor involvement was lacking. The problem is that only a small percentage of students have completed a Pathfinder program project. A PDP may increase sponsor involvement and give participants the tools to help students move towards becoming independent, self-directed learners.

Faculty at a South African institution named self-directedness as a learning priority (Reitsma et al., 2012). One of the ways they addressed this priority was faculty development. The goal of their professional development was to prepare instructors to emphasize self-directed learning in their classrooms. Reitsma et al. (2012) reported that the faculty PDP included reflections, discussions, and group activities. According to Kemp and Baker (2013) reflection is an essential tool for effective teaching. The proposed PDP will create a safe environment to encourage participants to be actively involved and critically reflective (Beavers, 2011). The objectives for a professional development course designed by Madan et al. (2012) included collaborative exchange and reflection.

The use of role play in professional development was studied by Johansson,

Skeff, and Stratos (2012). The research was conducted to discover how effective role playing was as an instructional strategy. The results illustrated that role play was an effective strategy and participants felt that the PDP was useful in improving teaching skills (Johansson et al., 2012). By including role play in the PDP, participants will have a greater understanding of how to assist students with self-directedness.

Many of the research articles studied faculty development for online teachers. Vaill and Testori (2012) described a three-tiered approach that was used at their college. The three tiers were, initial training, peer mentoring and ongoing support. The authors stated that quality PDPs are imperative for successful online programs. This can be said of all programs. PDPs need to be planned carefully and should consist of more than one lone PDP (Vaill & Testori, 2012).

Mentoring

Mentoring will be included in the proposed 3-day PDP. Sponsors for the Pathfinder program are mentoring the students during their project. The data analysis illustrated that sponsors did not assist or have a mentoring relationship with the students. There were also inconsistencies from one sponsor to the next. The Pathfinder program has a list of expectations for sponsors, but because of the voluntary nature, no training has been initiated.

The word mentor has many definitions. Terms used include: guide, support, and development of trust and respect (Lumpkin, 2011). Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, and Wilbanks (2011) defined mentoring as an association between an experienced person and a less experienced person. They go on to state that this association is distinguished by

consistent contact in order to promote experience for the less experienced person.

According to Kahle-Piasecki (2011), mentors have an important relationship with their mentees. Mentors help enhance performance and transfer knowledge (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). Matching mentors to mentees is important for successful relationships (Haggard et al., 2011). The partnering of Pathfinder program students and sponsors can be originated by either person. The matching is random, but most students will choose a sponsor that they trust and are familiar with.

A study completed by Liu, Xu, and Weitz (2011) described the importance of mentors during experiential internships. The study concluded that there was a direct link between mentoring and intern satisfaction with their internships (Liu et al., 2011). Mentoring, which will be a part of the 3-day PDP will benefit sponsors because mentors are more successful if they are prepared and ready for their roles (Lumpkin, 2011).

Benefits of Professional Development

One of the benefits of professional development is increased knowledge and skills (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2011). According to Beavers (2011) professional development provides a way for faculty to collaborate and problem solve. The proposed PDP includes collaborative and hands-on activities that increases the likelihood that knowledge and skills will improve (Garet et al., 2011). Participants may gain strategies that will enable them to assist students with their proposals and in their classrooms. Steinert et al. (2012) posited the following benefits of professional development programs: satisfaction personally and professionally, content relevance,

increased motivation, and awareness of personal strengths.

Challenges of Professional Development

One of the negatives of professional development is that many mandated PDPs become a way to receive credit instead of learning (Beavers, 2011). If faculty members are forced to attend training, transfer of learning may not take place. Some faculty members may be resistant to change (Ihde, 2011). The Pathfinder program was instituted August of 2013. As a new co-curricular program, faculty and staff may be reluctant to participate. Sponsorship is voluntary and there is a possibility faculty and staff will not attend the 3-day PDP.

Additionally, if the facilitator of the PDP or the PDP itself is not presented well, valuable information will be lost (Beavers, 2011). The Director of the Pathfinder program will designate a facilitator for the program. An effective facilitator should possess a wide range of knowledge and skills (Egan-Lee et al., 2011). The role of the facilitator includes realizing what expertise and experiences participants bring to the table (Patton et al., 2012). Teachers provided the direction, and were able to increase their experience.

Implementation

The results of the study found that sponsors were not assisting students with proposals, and were not supporting students during their project. A 3-day PDP was developed to present strategies to sponsors that would help students become self-directed, motivated learners. The PDP may also decrease the inconsistencies between the sponsors.

Potential Resources and Existing Supports

The Pathfinder Project Program director has given her full support to this project study. The Pathfinder program is starting its third year so the interest in this project is high. Having institutional support is important to the success of this 3-day PDP. Caffarella (2010) stated that support for training programs is crucial.

Classrooms are available at both campuses. A large room with moveable tables will be requested. Depending on the number of participants, additional rooms for small group collaboration will be needed. All classrooms are equipped with technology. Technology includes computers, overhead projectors, dvd players, smartboards, and whiteboards. Two facilitators will be utilized to assist with the presentation and group activities. In order for facilitators to be effective, they need to have the ability to manage small groups, and the ability to deliver PDP activities to a heterogeneous group of faculty and staff (Egan-Lee et al., 2011). Four current SPC students will be selected by the Director of the Pathfinder program to present their independently proposed project. The criteria for selection will be completion of one or more Pathfinder projects. These students will them participate in a panel discussion on Day 1 of the proposed PDP. Two video clips are hyperlinked in the PowerPoint. These videos were retrieved from you tube and are contained in the references

Details of the PDP will be sent through SPC's e-mail network. Deans of their respective schools will be asked by the Director of the Pathfinder program, to discuss the PDP in departmental meetings. The only costs that will be incurred include: printed materials for the participants, and food for lunch and breaks (if approved by the

Pathfinder committee).

Potential Barriers

Even with support from administrators, faculty and staff may not attend the PDP because it is voluntary. Becoming a sponsor for the Pathfinder program is not a requirement. Some faculty and staff are reluctant to become sponsors for various reasons. One reason may be time constraints. They are unable or unwilling to make the time commitment to work with a student. The program is relatively young, and some may be resistant to the concept of co-curricular projects.

Another barrier may be that the PDP will be offered as 3-day sessions. Scheduling is always an issue. The optimal time to conduct the PDP would be in the beginning of the fall semester, when faculty and staff are returning to campus. Although the proposed PDP is written as a consecutive 3day PDP, other platforms may be considered. The 3-days could be split into three 1-day sessions. Online PDPs have become a popular way to deliver ongoing training (Chitanana, 2012). The PDP could be offered entirely or partially online.

Timetable

The results of the study indicated the lack of sponsor support for students in the Pathfinder program. A PDP was developed to provide sponsors with the tools to help students move towards becoming independent, self-directed learners. The optimal time for the 3-day PDP to be scheduled is at the start of the school year in August (2016). A second class may be scheduled for fall if needed.

Roles and Responsibilities

My role as the architect of this project was to include all resources needed to successfully implement a 3-day PDP. All resources will be provided in Appendix A and include outlines, timetables, notes, and all necessary materials. The main goal of this program is to help sponsors realize how to help students move forward with their Pathfinder projects and become independent learners. It will be the responsibility of the Pathfinder Committee and college administration to review the PDP. They will be responsible for assigning and supervising facilitators. Sponsors (faculty and staff) will be the participants and they will be responsible for attendance, being respectful to their colleagues. I will assist with logistics such as reserving the room, all printed materials and securing refreshments. I will also be available at the PDP to support the program.

Project Evaluation

The goal of the PDP is to improve sponsors' ability to guide students toward self-directed learning. According to Caffarella (2010), evaluations are utilized to make decisions about how well the PDP is accomplishing its goals. Evaluation of the 3-day PDP informs us whether the goals of the project have been met. The data obtained from the evaluations let us know what went well, and what might need to be changed. The evaluations will be goals based and summative evaluations will be used.

Surveys are the most common evaluation tool (Dean, Tait, & Kim, 2012). At the end of each day, a questionnaire based on a four point Likert scale will be completed to evaluate the program for that day. The reason for evaluating at the end of each day is twofold. The first is that the thoughts and feelings of the participants are fresh in their

minds. Secondly, having one survey at the end would make the survey long and pertinent data may be lost. Reflection questions will be included at the end of each survey. During the PDP, facilitators will be observing small groups and will complete a survey on their observations.

After the project, all evaluations will be analyzed. Facilitators will meet with the Pathfinder program committee to discuss evaluation results. Other stakeholders include the college's president and other vice-presidents. The Director of the Pathfinder program will meet with the other stakeholders once a consensus if reached. At that time decisions will be made as to what changes if any need to be made to the program. PDP's are an investment so it is important to establish whether they make a difference (King, 2014). After 6 months, a follow up assessment will be completed to determine if the program is effective, what if anything needs to be added or changed, and future scheduling of the PDP.

Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

At the local level, this project may impact faculty, staff, and students. The data that was analyzed during this study, revealed lack of sponsor assistance during Pathfinder projects. Sponsors include faculty and staff, who will gain a better understanding of how to assist and guide students towards self-directed learning. This will help to increase the number of students participating in the Pathfinder program and may entice sponsors to join the program. The 3-day PDP could also affect a change in the way faculty members teach, which in turn increases student learning. Students, who become self- directed

learners, are motivated, and become life-long learners. The Pathfinder program is co-curricular and a graduation requirement. The adoption of the PDP will be a benefit to SPC.

Far-Reaching

This project study was focused on a small private college with a program that was co-curricular. Colleges across the United States are including experiential/service learning in their curriculum. Instructors need to become facilitators. The PDP could help all instructors understand the importance of helping students transition into self-directed reflective learners. Students benefit because self-directed learning is positively correlated to academic success (Mega et al., 2013).

Summary

Section 3 included a discussion of a PDP that was created. This program was developed because of a need that was identified after data was analyzed. A literature review was completed that contained sections on constructivism, adult learning, and professional development. Implementation of the PDP, which covered resources, barriers, a timetable, responsibilities, and evaluation, were examined.

Section 4 concludes this project study with the project's strengths and limitations a discussion of its implications, some directions for future research, and alternate approaches.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

The project study's purpose was to gain an understanding about independently developed projects for the Pathfinder program. A qualitative instrumental case study was carried out. Interviews and reflective documents were used to collect data. Through data analyses, it was determined that a PDP may provide needed strategies to sponsors of the Pathfinder program. Section 4 includes a discussion of the project, its strengths and weaknesses, alternatives, scholarship, and leadership. When I began my studies as a doctoral student, I was unsure of where the journey would take me. This section will allow me to reflect on how I have grown as a scholar, project creator, and a practitioner.

Project Strengths

The project study examined how a select number of students described their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project. The data collected illustrated that the students who were interviewed were self-directed learners. They were able to propose and complete their project with minimal assistance. The problem was that only a small number of students have independently developed their first project. During data collection participants reported that they did not receive much assistance from their sponsors. The project promotes strategies that will help sponsors to be proactive with the participants of the Pathfinder program. These strategies will help guide students towards self-directed learning and mentoring.

Faculty members and staff are eligible to volunteer as sponsors. Sponsors may not realize that students are in need of help. They may not know how to support students

and help to move them towards self-direction. A PDP was developed to present strategies that sponsors could use for students in the Pathfinder program. Appendix A evolved from research that was conducted at SPC which is strength of the project. A second strength is the PDP itself. It will use a constructivist framework and was developed using adult learning theories. Participants will have the opportunity to collaborate, share experiences, and reflect.

Recommendations for Remediation of Limitations

An unforeseeable limitation of the study was the small number of participants. I was approved to begin data collection just as the semester ended. Students left the campus and did not check their e-mail. Seven participants responded, which was 35% of the requests sent. The data gained from the seven participants became redundant, so saturation was reached. There is not a way to remediate this limitation. The Pathfinder program is young; it is starting its third year. Consequently, there is always the possibility of further research.

There is the possibility of non-attendance at the PDP. This limitation or barrier may be due to the voluntary nature of the Pathfinder program. Sponsors may volunteer to sponsor a student, or students may ask faculty or staff to sponsor them. Remediation may include administration making the PDP mandatory. Another possibility would be to offer the PDP in other configurations. Instead of 3 consecutive days, the PDP could be offered in one-day increments or online.

I minimized the possibility that my faculty position with SPC was a limitation. There was always the possibility that during the interview process, students' could have

Been intimidated by the process and the fact that I was a faculty member. I did reiterate to the students that the study was separate from my role as a faculty member. I also made sure they understood that no be any identifying information would be used. Since the students appeared comfortable and talkative, no remediation is recommended.

Scholarship

Education has always been important to me, and most of my college experiences have been as an older adult. When I decided to go back to school for a doctoral degree, I was not sure what to expect. However, I knew that it would require sacrifice and discipline. Not only sacrifice on my part, but sacrifice and understanding from family and friends. All of the coursework up to and including this project study has taught me more about myself as an educator and a person. I look at research articles with a critical eye. I have an understanding what goes into completing a research project. My scholarship included taking a problem, performing a literature review, and collecting and analyzing data. The analyzed data led me to developing a PDP to address the problem. Once this research project is under my belt, I look forward to completing further research with my colleagues. During this project study, I hit a few walls. These walls slowed me down, but did not stop me. Reaching my goal was more important and I was able to scale the hurdles. Everything that I have gained in the past 3 years, plus this project study will be a part of me. I am who I am because of my experiences and reflections.

Project Development and Evaluation

I have attended many PDPs during my career as an educator. I have never given any thought as to what goes into planning and implementing a PDP. I do not have

experience in project planning and some of the coursework taken these past few years assisted me in this endeavor. Through research and data collection, I determined that a 3-day PDP would be the optimal solution to the problem of students not being able to independently develop a Pathfinder project. Using adult learning theory, sponsors of the Pathfinder program will gain knowledge of how to assist our students with making the transition towards becoming self-directed learners.

Leadership and Change

Leadership has different meanings to different people. I believe that leadership is about achieving goals and impassioning others. This project study will lead to a terminal degree, which has been a goal of mine for a while. Hurdles were jumped, and life got in the way but I persevered. As a leader, I am a role model for the pre-service teachers that I instruct. I am a motivator and my passion for teaching hopefully ignites the passion that is inherent in my students. I realize this by the feedback I receive from them and the fact that they will come to me first to seek advice.

Education changes rapidly. We must be flexible and open to change in order to be effective. The Pathfinder program is new, and some may be reluctant to embrace it. By developing this 3-day program, I hope to help promote the importance of assisting our students to become self-directed learners and improve the sponsor/student relationship.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

First, I proved to myself that it was possible to be successful at the doctoral level. Having been out of school for many years, I was unsure of myself. As the doctoral program progressed, I learned how to complete a literature review, and read research with

a critical eye. I have grown as a researcher and look forward to continued research. A colleague at school has already asked if I would be willing to do a research project with her. It has not always been smooth sailing, but I had great people to lean on if I needed to. Dr. Beebe was always there to guide me back to the correct path. One of my colleagues at work who received her doctorate two years ago has been in my corner saying, you can do it! My online peers, one in particular who has been with me since day one continues to collaborate with me. I realize that it is called a terminal degree, but learning never ends when you are a lifelong learner.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

When I graduated from eighth grade, my second grade teacher wrote in my autograph book that she would see me in the public schools one day. Due to the winding road of life, a few other careers intervened. I finally landed where I was supposed to be, as an educator. Many times I take it for granted, but when I step into the classroom I am home. Meaningful professional development opportunities are needed. It is one of the best ways to collaborate with faculty members in other disciplines, and learn new strategies that will benefit our students. Reflection is an important part of the process, but I know that I do not always take the time out to do it. I have learned that I do not always have to agree with the ideas and values of others, but do need to listen and consider what my colleagues say.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

Prior to this project study, I did not have much experience with completing this type of PDP. I have written PowerPoints, and conducted seminars, but have not

developed a project of this magnitude. I learned that you could not just decide on a project to complete. You must look at the data that you collected, and fit the project to what is needed to solve your stated problem. Much thought went into the development of the 3-day PDP. Incorporating collaborative group activities was not an issue. It is an adult learning strategy that I use often in my own courses. The PDP may help sponsors assist our students with their Pathfinder program projects. In a broader context, strategies learned could also be utilized in the classroom to promote the self-directedness of our students.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

A program at SPC was instituted two years ago. This program mandated that students complete three co-curricular projects. The problem was that only a small percentage of students had completed their projects. A qualitative study was conducted and through data analysis, the determination was made that little or no assistance was received by the students. Many students coming to college are not self-directed. Faculty members may not realize this and may not know how to help students become independent learners. This PDP will give the sponsors of the program strategies in how to assist students in becoming self-directed. The information gained from the PDP could also be utilized in the classroom. The implication for social change includes emphasizing the importance of self-directed learning, and increasing student learning. The skills gained help students become lifelong learners.

This project study was focused on a small private college with a program that was co-curricular. Colleges across the United States are including experiential/service

learning in their curriculum. Instructors need to become facilitators. The PDP could help all instructors understand the importance of helping students transition into self-directed reflective learners. Students benefit because self-directed learning is positively correlated to academic success (Mega et al., 2013).

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Just the other day a student came to me with her idea for a Pathfinder project. She asked if I would be willing to serve as her sponsor (my first). Since I had completed my data collection, analysis, and write up, I said okay. On a personal level I have gained much knowledge from completing this research study. I will be a better sponsor than I would have been previously. Since the project has been beneficial to me, it will be interesting to see how it affects the Pathfinder program sponsors. There were many times that the process seemed daunting. One example was the interview process. You strive to be confident when you do not feel confident. You hope that you do not stumble and say something you should not. Once the first participant walked through the door, everything fell into place.

Prior to the last course, I was unsure of what topic I would like to complete a research on. In retrospect, my topic was the correct one for me. Experiential learning is dear to my heart. I am a believer that we learn from our experiences. The Pathfinder program offers our students a unique experience that will become part of who they are. The proposed project can have an impact on sponsors and in turn our students.

Further research could include a follow up with sponsors who attended the PDP to determine its effectiveness. This study examined the characteristics of students who had

completed one or more independently proposed project. Additionally, research could be completed to explore students' perceptions of the program before and after completing a Pathfinder project. The benefit of that would be to see growth in the students' self-directedness.

Conclusion

Section 4 provided the opportunity for me to reflect on my experience as a researcher, scholar, and practitioner. Through this journey, I learned how to conduct research, collect and analyze data, and develop a PDP. I was also able to explore the strengths and weakness of the study in order to remediate its limitations. The culmination of the section included my consideration of the project's impact on social change.

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Appendix A: Project Proposal

Pathfinder Program: Sponsors R Us

A 3-Day Professional Development Program

Evelyn N. Sears

Introduction

A Professional Development Program (PDP) was developed for SPC Pathfinder program sponsors. Sponsors include faculty members and staff who work directly with students to propose and carry out Pathfinder projects. A study was completed to explore how a select group of students described their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project. A qualitative case study was utilized to examine how students view the process of project development. The PDP was developed as a direct result of data that was collected and analyzed. The analysis of the data collected during this study revealed that participants were receiving very little if any, assistance from their sponsors. Additionally, there was not any consistency or level of commitment between sponsors.

Purpose

The purpose of this 3-day PDP is to assist sponsors with facilitating students with their Pathfinder program projects. This PDP will help sponsors understand what they can do to help students progress through their projects. This program will include strategies to guide students towards self-directed learning, and mentoring. Through the use of presentations, collaboration, activities, and reflection, sponsors will acquire knowledge and strategies that they will be able to use for the Pathfinder program, and in their classrooms.

Target Audience

Becoming a sponsor for the Pathfinder program is voluntary. Faculty and staff are eligible to be sponsors. Some faculty members are advisors. Advisors introduce the

program to students and monitor their progress. The target audience for this program will be all faculty members and staff, whether or not they have sponsored a student.

Timeline

The purpose of this study was to explore what 8% of the freshman/sophomore students are doing to independently develop projects for the Pathfinder program. The research question that guided this study was: How do a select group of students at a small private college in the Southeast region of the United States describe their ability to conduct an independently developed Pathfinder program project? Data collection was completed through interviews and document analysis. The analysis of the data collected during this study revealed that participants were receiving very little if any, assistance from their sponsors. Additionally, there was not any consistency or level of commitment between sponsors.

The results of this study and the PDP will be presented to the president of SPC, the Vice-President of Student Affairs, the director of the Pathfinder program, and the Pathfinder program committee. The stakeholders will make the decision as to when the PDP will be scheduled. The optimal time for the3-day PDP would be at the end of summer when faculty and staff return to campus (August 2016). If it becomes problematic to complete the 3 days consecutively, the program could be split into three 1-day PDPs.

E-mail Invitation for PDP

You are invited to a 3-day professional development program entitled SPONSORS R US. This professional development program is open to all full-time

faculty and staff, whether or not you have been a sponsor for the Pathfinder program. The program will include strategies to guide students towards self-directed learning, and mentoring.

When: Wednesday August X, 2016 through Friday August X, 2016, 9:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m.

Where: Room XXX

Please respond by July X, 2016.

Goals

1. To increase the knowledge of sponsors so that they can successfully guide students through the process of independently conducting Pathfinder projects.
2. In the long term sponsors will be able to help students become self-directed and lifelong learners.

Learning Objectives

Day 1

1. Explain what the Pathfinder program
2. Discuss why the Pathfinder program is important
3. Describe the different categories of interest
4. Explain the expectations for sponsors
5. Define reflection and discuss its importance

Day 2

1. Identify characteristics of self-directed learners
2. Define self-directed learning

3. Explain why students need to become self-directed

4. Discuss how to guide students towards independence

5. Explain why coaching is important

Day 3

1. Define mentors

2. Discuss effective mentoring

3. Describe types of mentoring

4. Explain barriers to mentoring

Budget

The costs below are based on a 3-day session for 30 participants.

Room and equipment		No Charge
Printing, journal books, pens, and miscellaneous supplies		$ 400.00
Breakfast/coffee/juice	$240 per day x 3 days	$ 720.00
Lunch	$450 per day x 3 days	$1,350.00
Breaks: water/soda	$120 per day x 3 days	$ 360.00
Salary Facilitators for 3 day program		
	$50/hour x 2 facilitators x 21 hours	$2,100.00
Prep work (copying collating, set-up)		
	$10/hour x 8 hours	$ 80.00
	Total Cost:	$5,010.00

Sponsors R Us: Day 1

9:00 – 10:30 Welcome and Introductions

Overview of the PDP

Day one will consist of:

Pathfinder program Overview and Update

Sponsors Expectations

Pathfinder student participants' presentation

Reflection

Activity #1

Experiential Recall

Think – pair – share

10:30 – 10:45 Break

10:45 – 12:00 Pathfinder program Overview and Update

Pathfinder program Overview

Where are we today? Sponsor Expectations

Activity #2

Small groups (5-7)

Characteristics of an effective sponsor

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

1:00 – 2:00 Pathfinder program student participants' presentation

Activity #3

Panel discussion with four students who have completed one or more projects

2:00 – 2:15 Break

2:15 – 3:30 Reflection

Pathfinder program reflection

Importance of reflection

Activity #4

Reflection of Day 1

Journaling

3:30 – 4:00 Wrap-up

Evaluations

Activities – Day 1

Activity #1 - Experiential Recall

Objective: Introduction of participants. Empathy for our students.

Participants will reflect and answer the questions posted on the PowerPoint (slide#3), pair with another participant, and share with entire group.

Materials: paper and pencils

Activity #2 – Sponsor Characteristics

Objective: Participants will generate a list of what makes a good sponsor.

Participants will break into groups (5-7) and brainstorm ideas of what they believe would make a good sponsor. Each group will decide on five characteristics that they believe would be the most important. They will place each on a sticky note and place them on the wall in the classroom. As they place them, the facilitator will begin to look for commonalities and stick them together. When everyone is done, the group will discuss.

Materials – Post-it notes for every group.

Activity #3 – Discussion Student Panel

Objective: Participants learn the process that students adhere to for project completion.

PDP Participants will discuss with the invited students (who have completed one or more project) and ask questions in order to become more familiar with the process.

Materials – n/a

Activity #4 – Reflection

Objective: Reflection of Day 1 content

Each participant will reflect on Day 1 and write a journal entry. Participants will be asked to keep journals and bring them with when they return the next day.

Facilitators will walk around monitoring writing of reflections

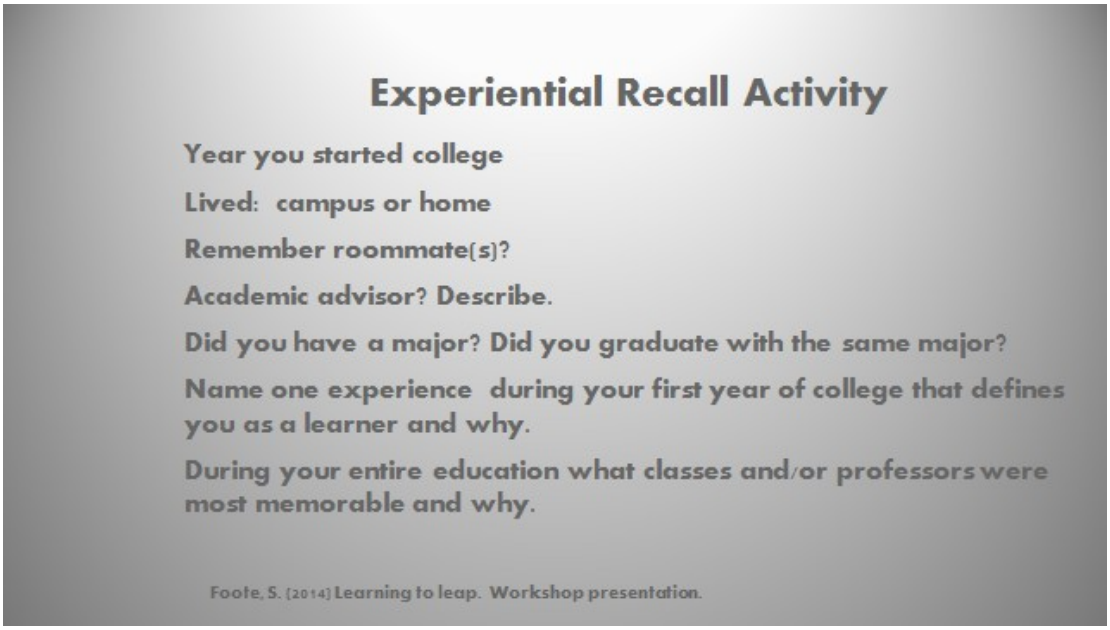
Materials: Journal provided for daily reflections.

Expectations of Sponsors

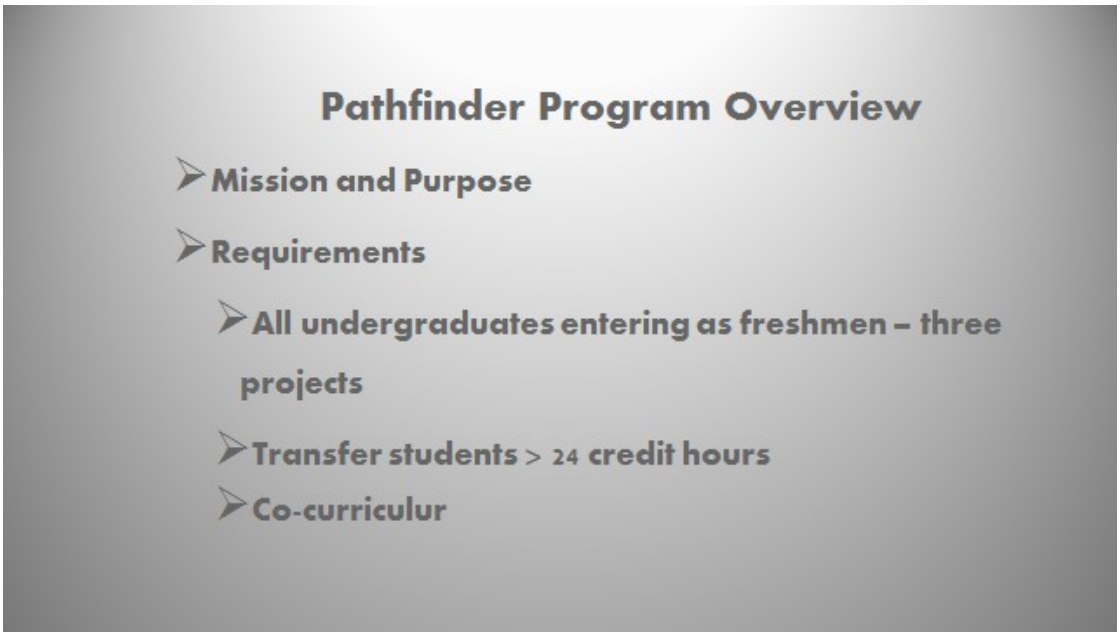
- act as College liaison to community partners, when applicable;
- assistance with the development of proposal if necessary;
- approve the Project Proposal;
- convene group if multiple students are involved;
- reserve campus space as needed;
- assist students with publicity for related events, if applicable;
- track student progress during ELE;
- confirm number of hours expended;
- update academic advisors at their request;
- meet with each student for final reflection;
- file copies of reflection responses with the Chaplain;
- confirm submission of précis to the Registrar;
- respond to requests for information related to follow-up publicity or events.

SPC (2014). *Pathfinder Committee*. Retreived November 15, 2014, from college under study (asked not to use name of college).

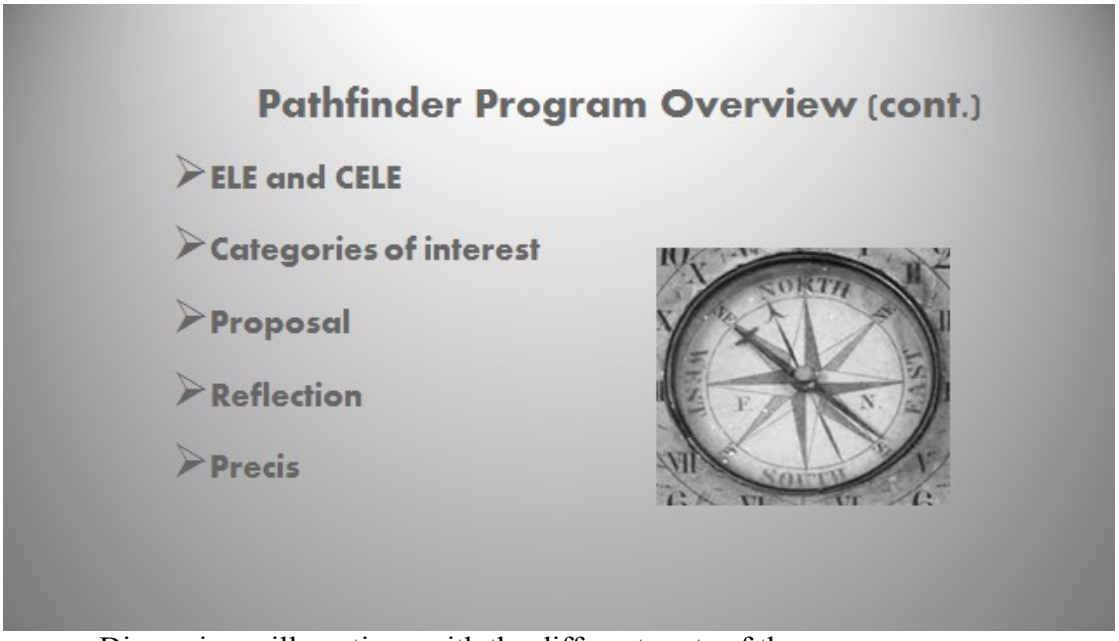
Welcome to Day 1 of a 3-Day PDP. My name is…..Today we will be talking about the Pathfinder program, what the expectations for sponsors is, some of the students who have completed a project will be here to talk to us and answer questions, and we will be discussing the importance of reflection. Thank you for coming. Please let us know if there is anything that you need.



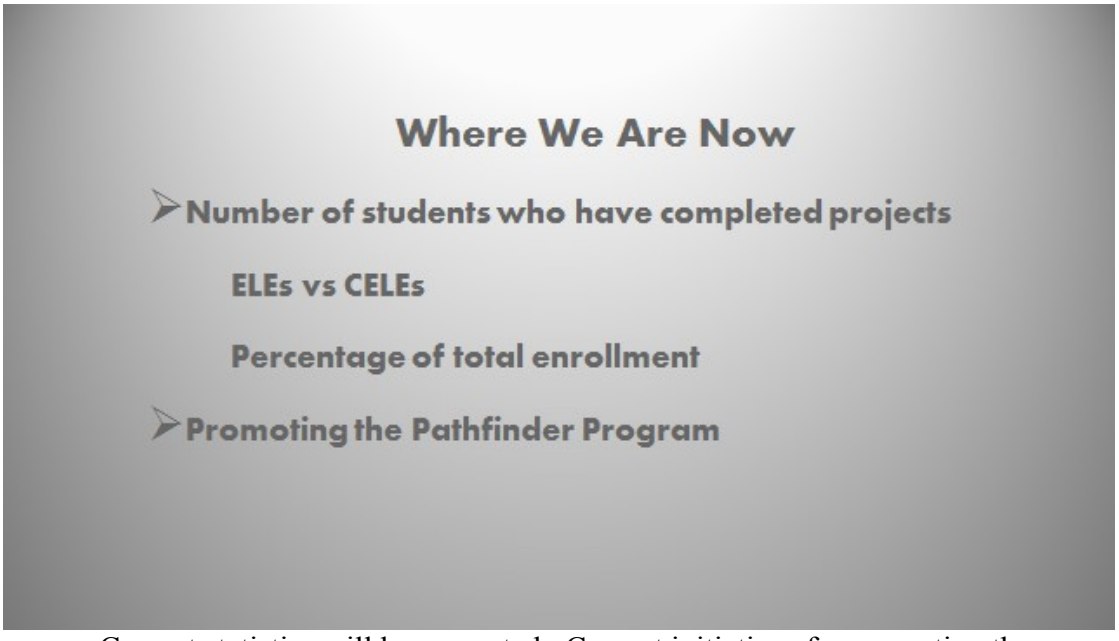
ACTIVITY #1 Let's start out by taking a few moments to think back a few years ago (maybe more than a few years for some of us). Write down what you can remember, than share with a partner. We share with the whole group in a few minutes.



Discuss the mission and purpose of the program, and requirements.

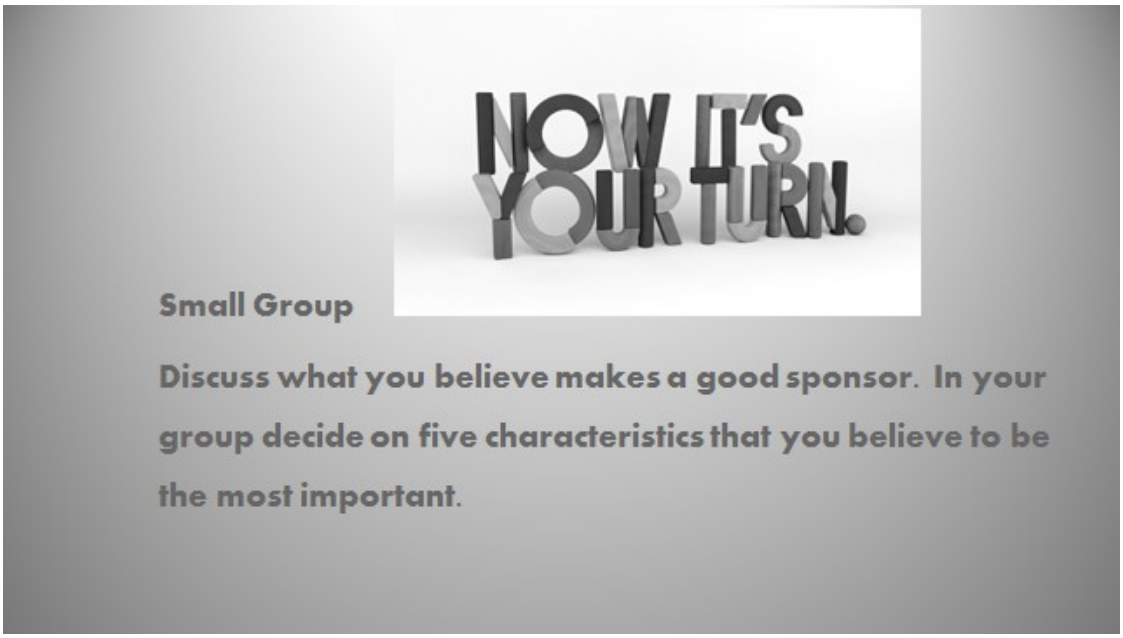


Discussion will continue with the different parts of the program.

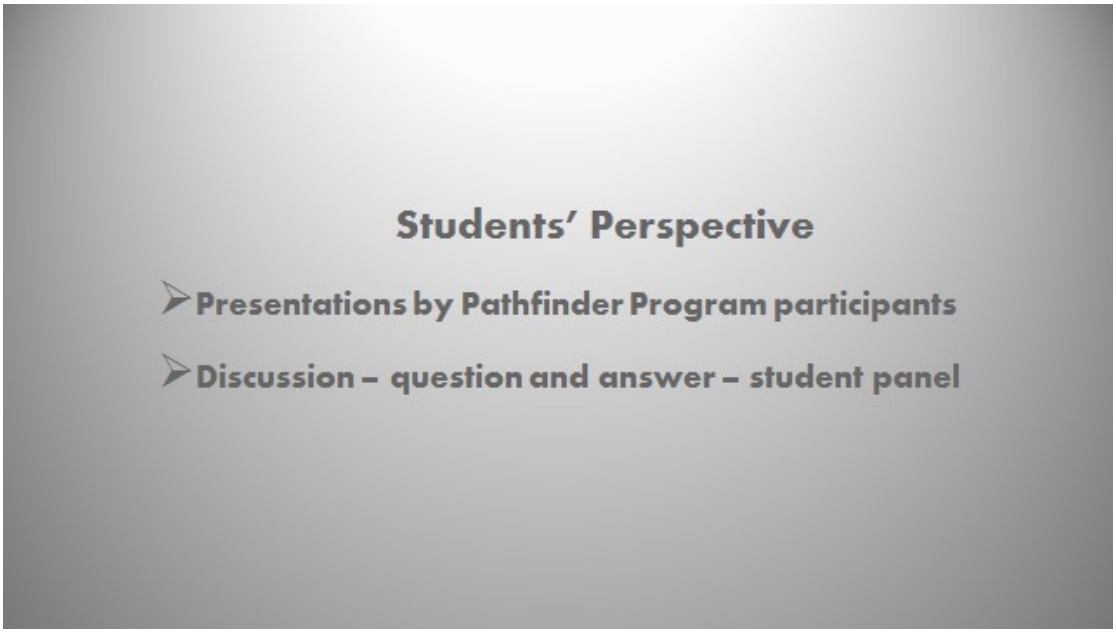


Current statistics will be presented. Current initiatives for promoting the program will also be presented.

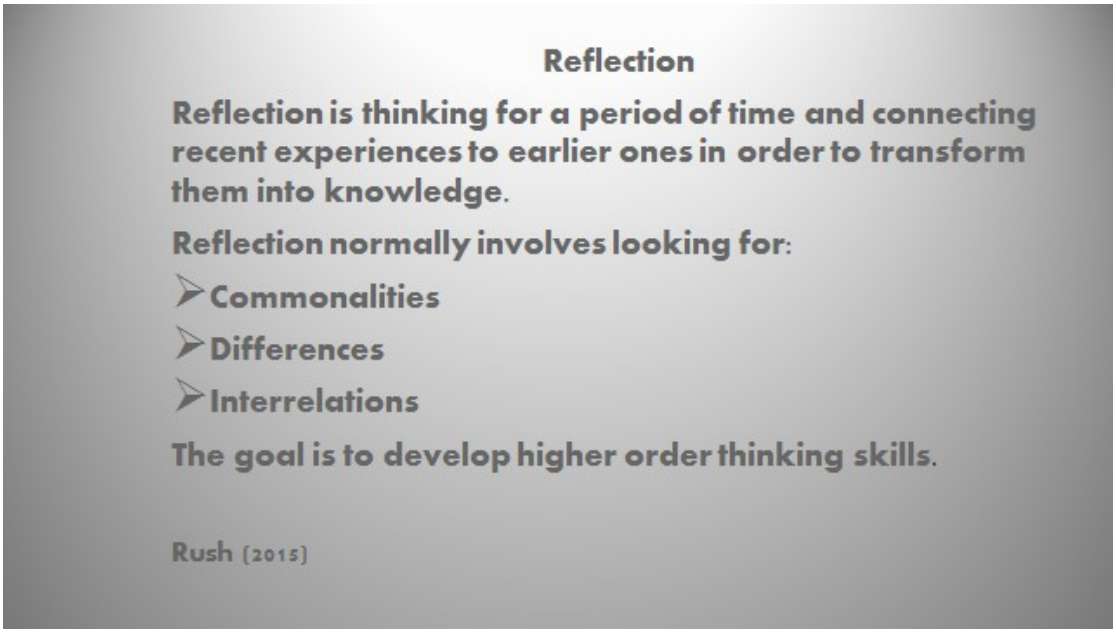
The commitment of sponsors is the foundation of the program. Although voluntary there are expectations for sponsors which are spelled out in the program. You have a copy of these expectations (p.106.). Sponsors are charged with helping students with their proposals when needed.



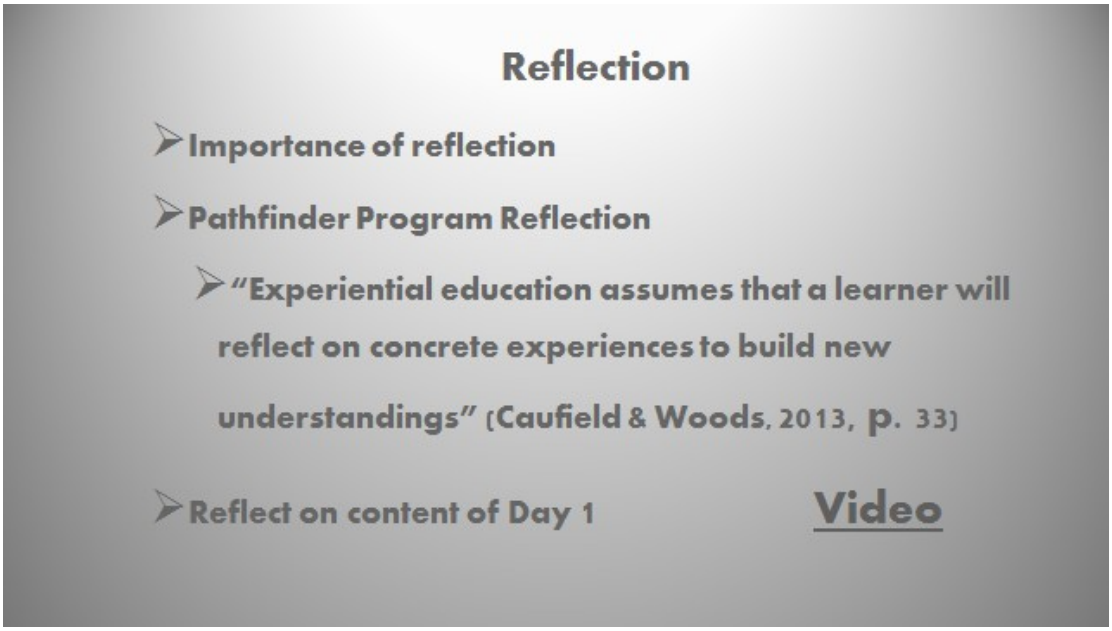
Activity #2 In you groups discuss what you believe makes a good sponsor. Make a list and then decide on five characteristics that you believe are most important. Place one on each of five post-it notes and place them on the wall when you are done. If you see one like yours place it on top of it.



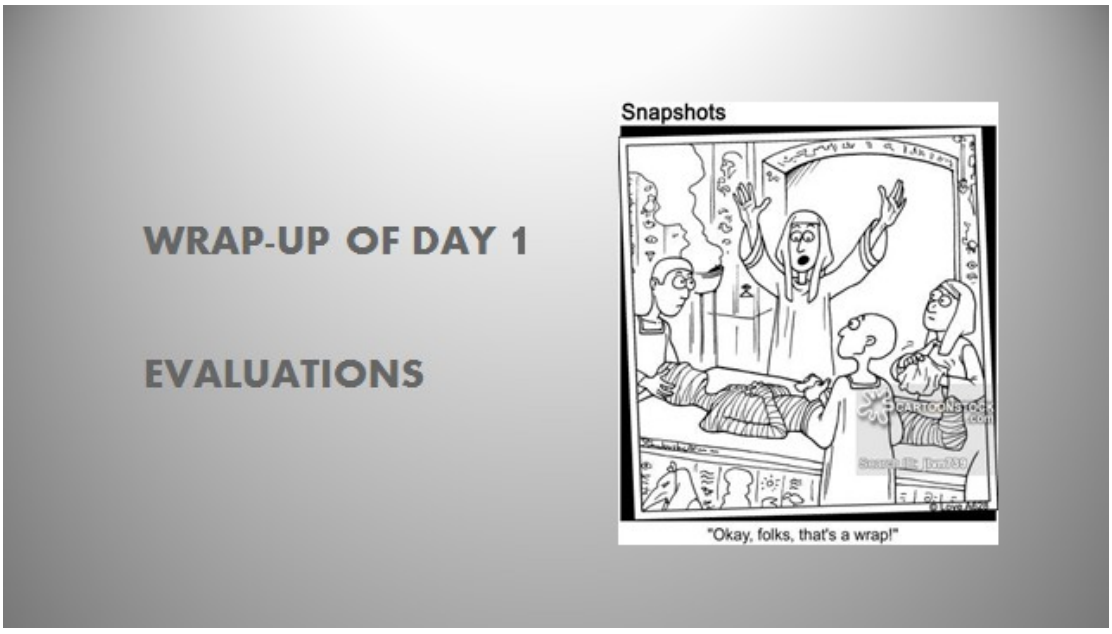
Activity #3 We have a group of students who have come today to present their projects, and speak to us about the process. This is an open forum.



Read the definition. Discussion: what does that mean: commonalities, differences, interrelations. Ask participants to comment, or add what they perceive reflection to be.



Activity #4 Watch short video on reflections. Why is reflection important? Why is it included as part of the Pathfinder program requirements? Participants will reflect on the content of Day 1.



Facilitators will wrap-up with a summary of the days learning. Ask for any questions and hand out the evaluation for Day 1.

Evaluation

Please take a few moments to fill out the following evaluation – Day 1

SPONSORS R US.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1. I found the content to be relevant.						
2. My knowledge of self-directed learning has increased.						
3. I have been a sponsor, but the information learned today will assist me with future students' projects and also in my classroom (faculty).						
4. I have not sponsored a student, but the information learned today will assist me when I become a sponsor.						
5. The facilitator of the PDP was interesting and knowledgeable.						

What did you like about this PDP?

What did you not like about this PDP?

How would you improve this PDP?

What questions do you still have about Sponsors R Us?

Sponsors R Us: Day 2

9:00 – 10:00 Welcome Back

Day two will consist of:

Self-Directed Learning

Coaching

Activity #5

Characteristics Activity

Small Groups and Whole group

10:00 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 12:00 Self-Directed Learning

What is self-directed learning?

Importance of self-directed learning

Benefits of self-directed learning

Activity #6

Whole Group Discussion

Self-Directed Learning Activity

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

1:00 – 2:15 Self-Directed Learning

Why students are not self-directed

Pathfinder program and self-directed learning

2:15 - 2:30 Break

2:30 – 3:45 Coaching

Coaching vs. mentoring

Coaching as a form of mentoring

Activity #7

Whole Group Discussion

Example Poor Coaching Video

Activity #8

Reflection of Day two

Journaling

3:45 – 4:00	Wrap-up
	Evaluations

Activities - Day 2

Activity #5

Objective: Guess the characteristics of self-directed learners

Participants will break into groups (5-7), each group will be given 3 x 5 cards that have the following characteristics on the card: I am internally motivated, I am an independent learner, I set goals, I relate to my instructor as a facilitator, I am a leader, I am organized, and I am prepared.

Cards will be placed face down. One member of the group will pick up a card and without looking at it place it on their forehead. Other members will give clues so that the participant with the card on their forehead can guess what it is.

Small group

Whole group will discuss what clues they used.

Materials: Multiple sets of 3x5 cards with the characteristics above.

(Template p. 117)

Activity #6 – Self-Directed Learning Activity

Objective: Application of self-directed learning

Participants will answer three questions:

1. Write the first word that comes to your mind when you think of self-directed learning.
2. What do you know about self-directed learning?
3. How can you use self-directed learning in your own setting?
4. How do you currently use self-directed learning in your own setting?

Whole Group Discussion

Materials: n/a

Activity #7 – Example Poor Coaching

Objective: Picking out poor coaching examples from a video clip

Participants will view video clip and write down all of the examples of poor coaching.

Whole group discussion.

Materials: n/a

Activity #8 – Reflection

Objective: Reflection of Day 2 content

Each participant will reflect on Day 2 and write a journal entry. Participants will be asked to keep journals and bring them with when they return the next day.

Facilitators will walk around monitoring writing of reflections

Materials: Journal provided for daily reflections

ACTIVITY #5

I am internally motivated

I am an independent learner

I set goals

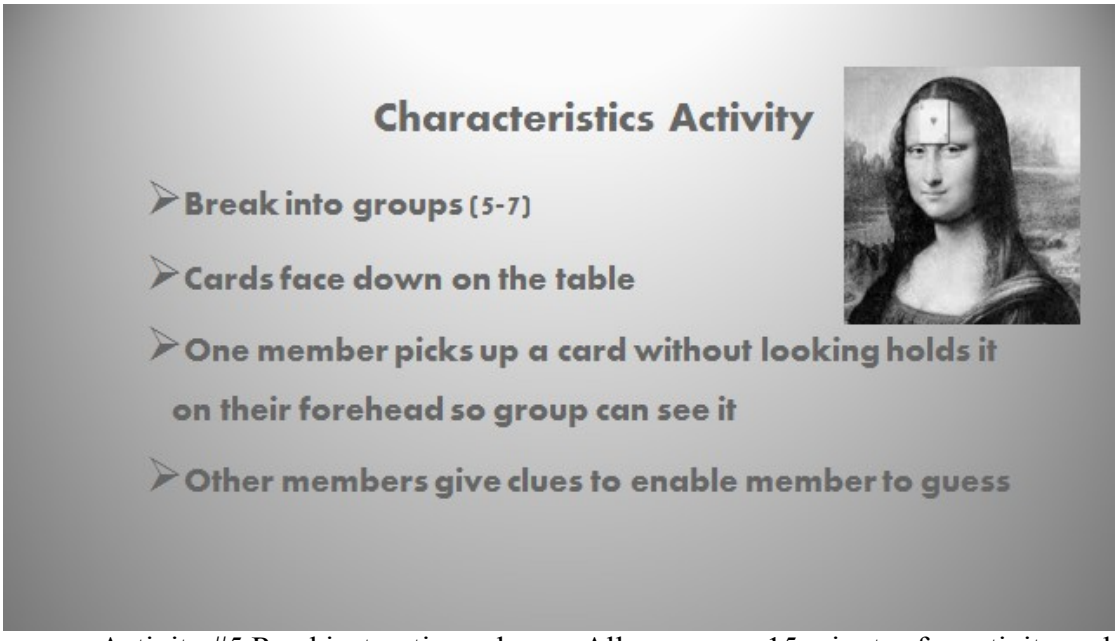
I relate to my instructor as a facilitator

I am a leader

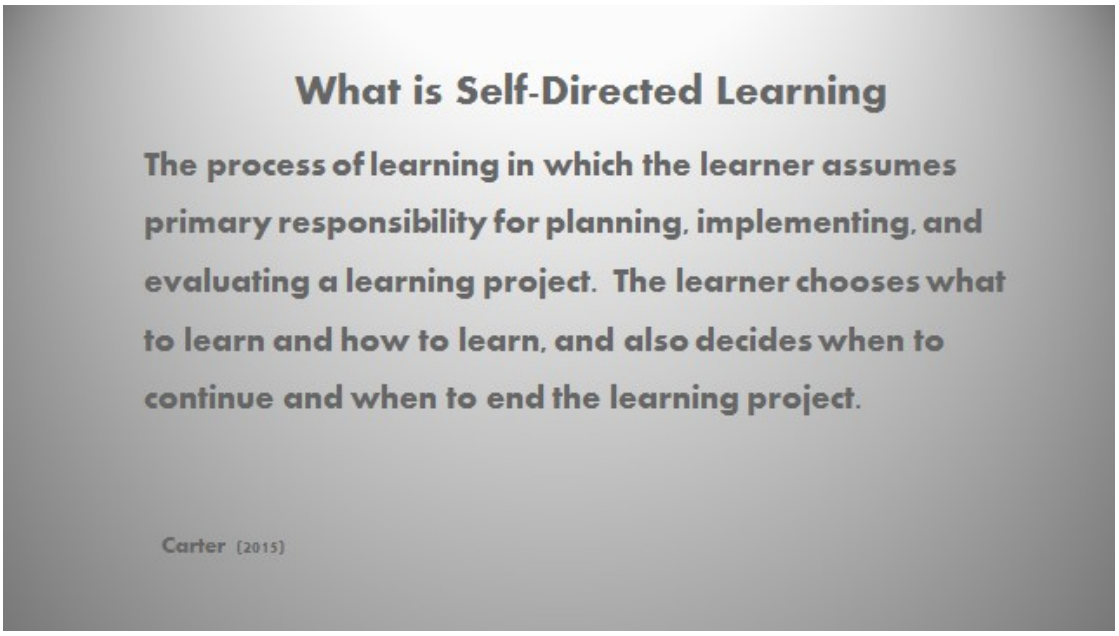
I am organized

I am prepared

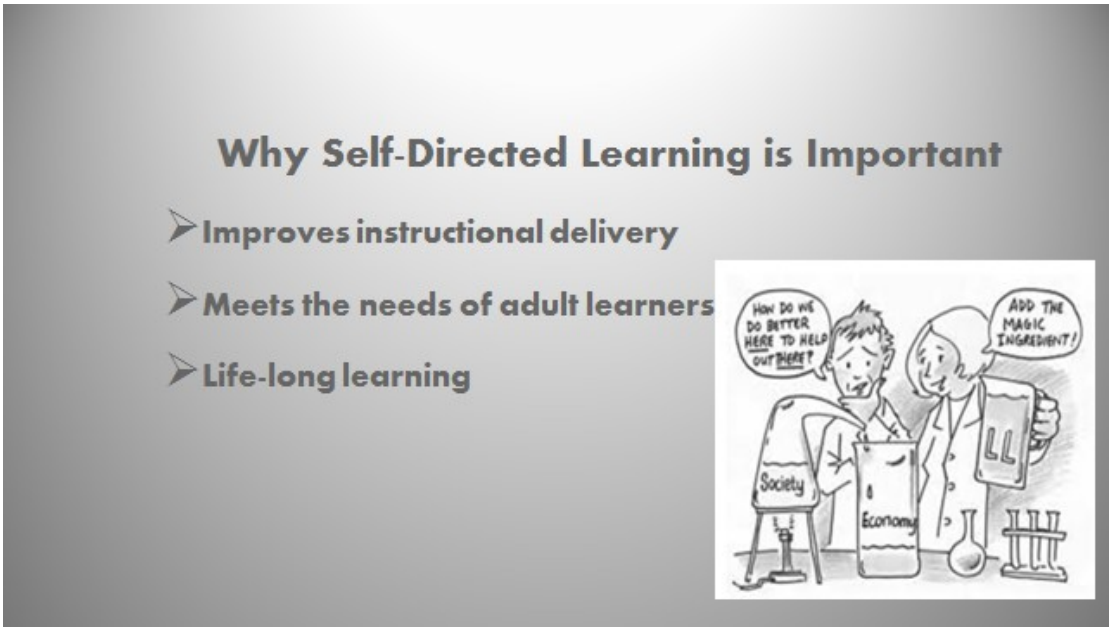
Welcome back to Day 2. Today we will be talking about self-directed learning, what why and how. We will also learn about coaching and the difference between coaching and mentoring.



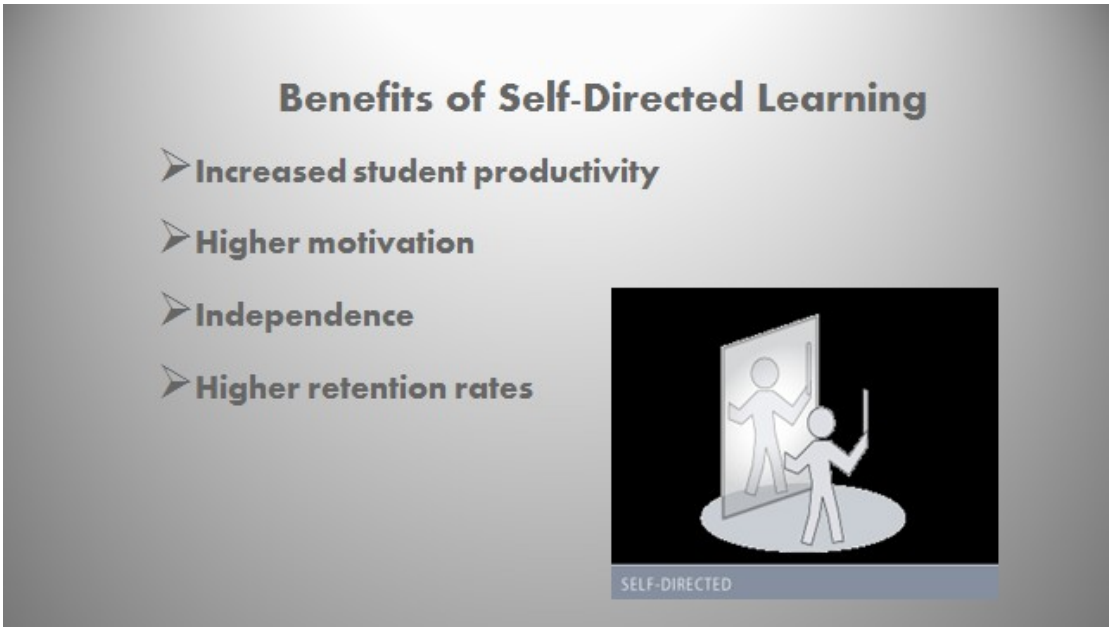
Activity #5 Read instructions above. Allow groups 15 minutes for activity and whole group will discuss clues used.



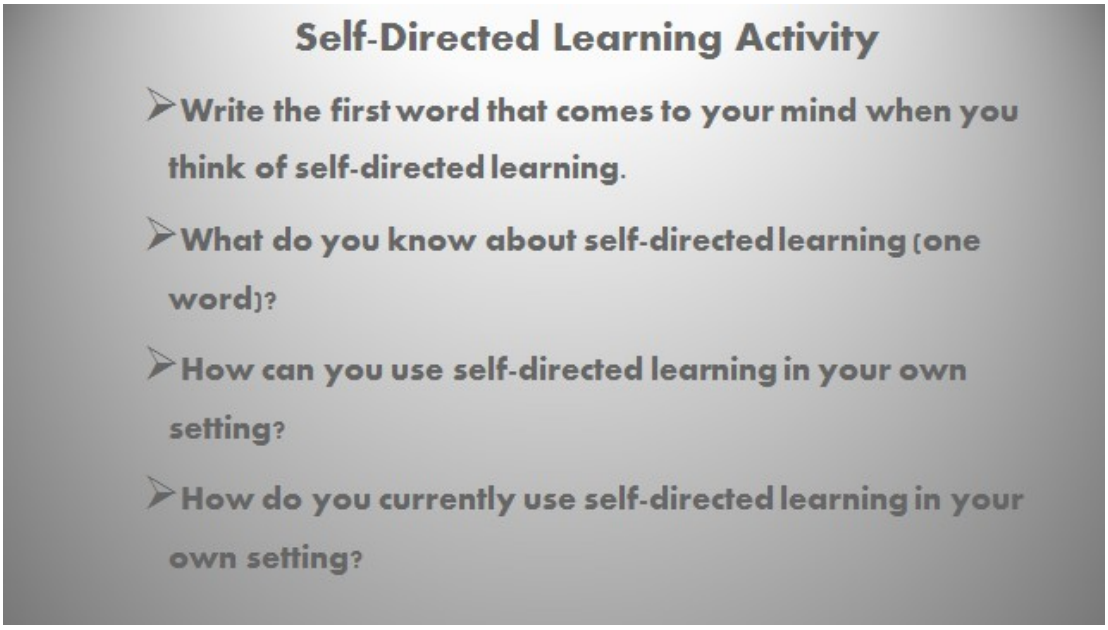
Read slide



Self-directed learning improves instructional delivery because students are in charge of their own learning. Self-directed adults learn more and are more motivated. Learners who become self-directed become life-long learners



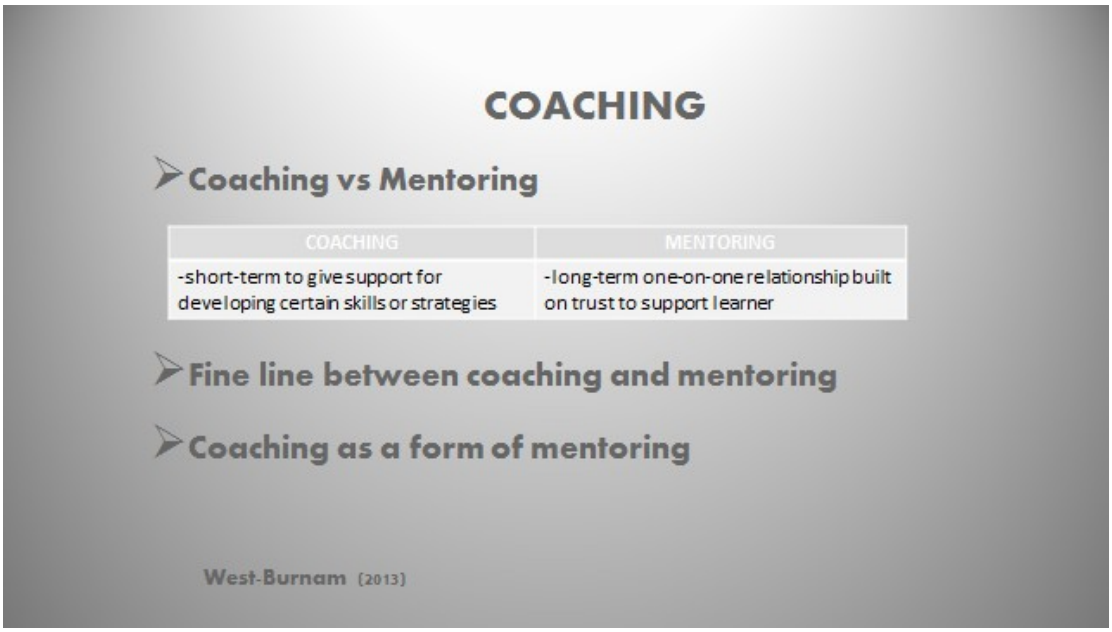
There are many benefits of self-directed learning. Read slide.



Activity #6 Take a few minutes to jot down the answers to the four questions. Whole group discussion.

There are many reasons that students are not self-directed. Many students come to college from an environment of teacher centered learning. We cannot make the assumption that students will be self-directed and we need to help them develop into independent learners.

Sponsors for the Pathfinder program are facilitators. They guide and assist students through their proposals and during their projects. Du (2012) suggested use of study plans to assist students with becoming independent learners. Study plans include a problem statement, and an action plan. Would this be feasible for the Pathfinder program? The Pathfinder program is PBL which supports self-directed learning.



Discuss definitions according to West-Burnam (2013). Ask for comments. Coaching is a form of mentoring, and sometimes you just need to be a cheerleader.

Activity # 7 Participants will be asked to write down what they observe (poor coaching) in the video clip. Does not know who he is meeting with, interrupts the learner, keeps referencing his notes, interrupts the learner, doesn't remember the last sessions's topics, no eye-contact, appears disinterested, interrupts learner-offers criticism (non-constructive), dismisses learner's explanation,advises learner not to follow-up on delegation, gives a book to read, discusses payment, cuts meeting short, doesn't say goodbye.

Activity #8 Reflections will be written in journals.

Facilitators will wrap-up with a summary of the days learning. Ask for any questions and hand out the evaluation for Day 2

Evaluation

Please take a few moments to fill out the following evaluation - Day 2

SPONSORS R US.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1. I found the content to be relevant.						
2. My knowledge of self-directed learning and has increased						
3. The information learned today will assist me with future students' projects and also in my classroom (faculty).						
4. The information learned today will assist me when I become a sponsor.						
5. The facilitator of the PDP was interesting and knowledgeable.						

What did you like about this PDP?

What did you not like about this PDP?

How would you improve this PDP?

What questions do you still have about Sponsors R Us?

Sponsors R Us: Day 3

9:00 – 10:00 Welcome Back

Day 3 will consist of:

Mentoring

Define, Characteristics, Effective mentoring

Activity #9

Characteristics Activity

Small Group

10:00 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 12:00 Mentors

Define

Characteristics of effective mentoring

Activity #10 Are you ready to be a mentor/sponsor

Readiness assessment

Think, pair, share

Whole group discussion

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

1:00 – 2:00

Activity #11 Role Play

Participants will role play: sponsors and students

Small groups (5-7)

Whole group discussion

2:00-2:15 Break

2:15 – 3:45 Mentoring and the Pathfinder program

Activity #12

Reflection of Day 3

Journaling

3:45 – 4:00 Wrap-up

Evaluations

Day 3

Activity #9 – Mentor Knowledge

Objective: To see what participants know about mentoring.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MENTORING

TRUE, OR FALSE? See how much you know about mentors, what they know, and what they do. Work with a partner to answer the questions and THEN provide a strong rationale and explanation for your answer. We will discuss your answers together as a class.

_____ A mentor is someone with years of experience to share with someone else.

_____ Mentors should keep everything having to do with a mentee confidential.

____ You have to be a math major to mentor Step I math teams.

_____ Maintaining eye contact while listening is important.

_____ Feedback involves praise and constructive criticism.

_____ In the mentoring relationship reflection is something that the mentee does.

_____ A mentor should be able to answer each question the mentee asks about teaching.

_____ The mentor learns about teaching from the mentoring process

Materials: Handout (p. 129)

Activity #10 Readiness assessment

Objective: Participants will take survey to see if they are ready to mentor/sponsor
After filling out survey, share with a partner, then discuss with group.
Materials: Handout (p. 130)

Activity #11 – Role Playing

Objective: Participants will have a chance to role play (mentor and mentees).
Participants will break into small groups (5-7). They will receive a set of scenario cards, one person will select a card, and will role play what is on the card. One other person in the group will play the mentor. Everyone in the group will have a chance to participate in the role play. Others in the group will take notes about what they are observing.
Facilitators will walk around to monitor groups.
Whole group discussion: mentor role play.
Materials: Scenarios (p. 131)

Activity #12 – Reflection

Objective: Reflection of Day 3 content

Each participant will reflect on Day 2 and write a journal entry. Participants will be asked to keep journals and bring them with when they return the next day.

Facilitators will walk around monitoring writing of reflections

Materials: Journal provided for daily reflections

Activity # 9

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MENTORING

TRUE, OR FALSE? See how much you know about mentors, what they know, and what they do. Work with a partner to answer the questions and THEN provide a strong rationale and explanation for your answer. We will discuss your answers together as a class.

_____ A mentor is someone with years of experience to share with someone else.

_____ Mentors should keep everything having to do with a mentee confidential.

____ You have to be a math major to mentor Step I math teams.

_____ Maintaining eye contact while listening is important.

_____ Feedback involves praise and constructive criticism.

_____ In the mentoring relationship reflection is something that the mentee does.

_____ A mentor should be able to answer each question the mentee asks about teaching.

_____ The mentor learns about teaching from the mentoring process

Activity #10

Mentor/Sponsor Readiness Survey

Please fill out the following. Am I…? or Do I…?
1 = ALWAYS
2= ALMOST ALWAYS
3= SOMETIMES
4= ALMOST NEVER
5= NEVER

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS	1	2	3	4	5
1. Spot potential and believe in others	1	2	3	4	5
2. Support reflection and review	1	2	3	4	5
3. Patience and tolerance	1	2	3	4	5
4. Encourage and cheerlead	1	2	3	4	5
5. Provide feedback	1	2	3	4	5
6. Good listener	1	2	3	4	5
NON-ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS	1	2	3	4	5
1. Too busy	1	2	3	4	5
2. Not interested	1	2	3	4	5
3. Too critical	1	2	3	4	5
4. Do not make eye contact	1	2	3	4	5
5. Do not listen	1	2	3	4	5

Do you believe that you are ready to become a mentor/sponsor? What would you need to change in order to become a mentor/sponsor?

Activity #11

Role Playing – Scenario Cards

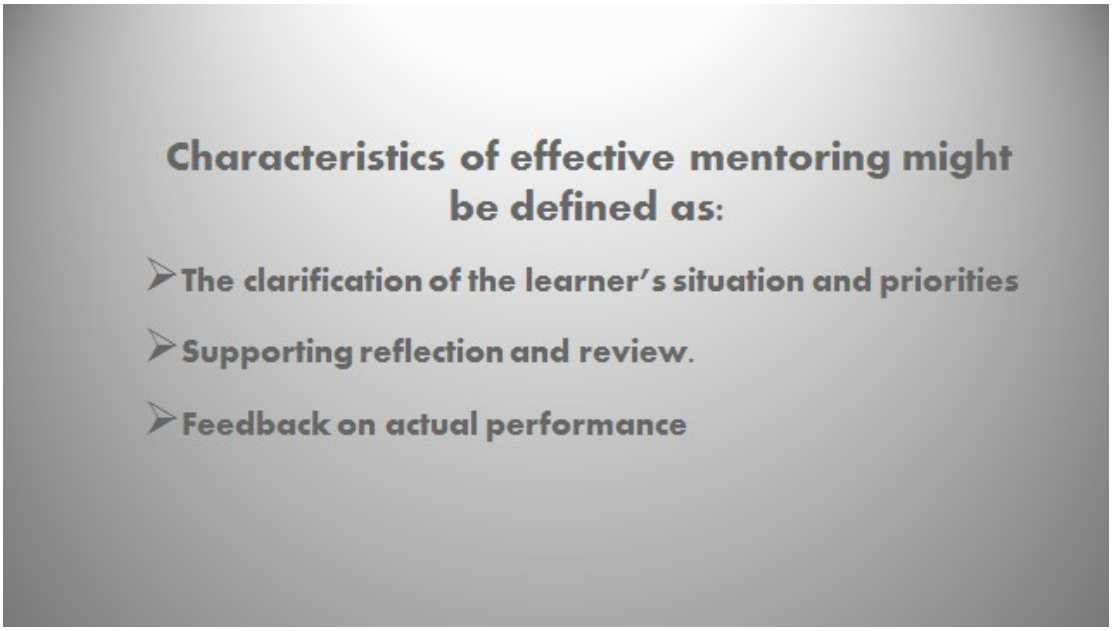
Scenario #1 You are a SHY student who needs to propose your first Pathfinder project. You do not know what you want to do a project on. Every time your mentor asks you a question, look down and shrug your shoulders.	**Scenario #2** You are a student who is having a meeting with your mentor. You handed your mentor a poorly written proposal. You say "I did not proof my proposal, so there may be errors. I do not want any feedback, I just want you to turn it in". Start playing with a pencil or your phone. When the mentor says something you say, "can you repeat that I was not paying attention".
Scenario #3 You are a student who has completed one project, so you are a know it all. You have an appointment with your mentor but you are late (don't apologize). Start talking about how busy your day has been. Ask her for help on your second project, but stay off topic. Example: are you married?, what are you doing tonight?, how long have you been teaching?, etc.	**Scenario #4** You are a student who is negative about the whole process. You have an appointment with your mentor, but your intent is to complain about having to complete a project. You tell your mentor that this is ridiculous, and you do not know why you have to do this. You do not want to do it and maybe if you wait, they will cancel the program.

Scenario #5 You are a sweet respectful student. You say yes ma'am or sir to anything your mentor says. You ask your mentor for help because you just do not know what you want to do for your first project.

Welcome to Day 3, our last day of Sponsors R Us. Today we will focus on mentors. We will define mentors, look at the characteristics of mentors, and effective mentoring.

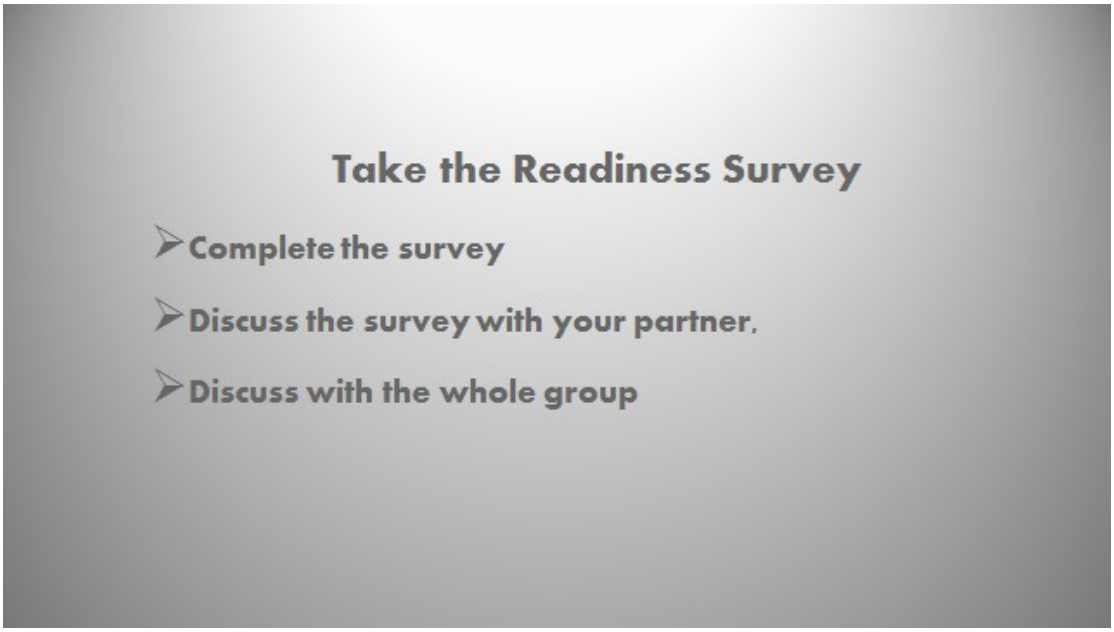
Activity #9 We are going to test your knowledge about mentoring. We are going to pass out the questionnaires, and you may work in pairs. Answer the questions and provide an explanation for your answers. We will then discuss as a group.

There are many definitions of what the term mentor means. There are over 50 definitions of the term mentor (Short, 2012). The definitions are driven by who the mentors are and what their purpose is. What could you add to this list?



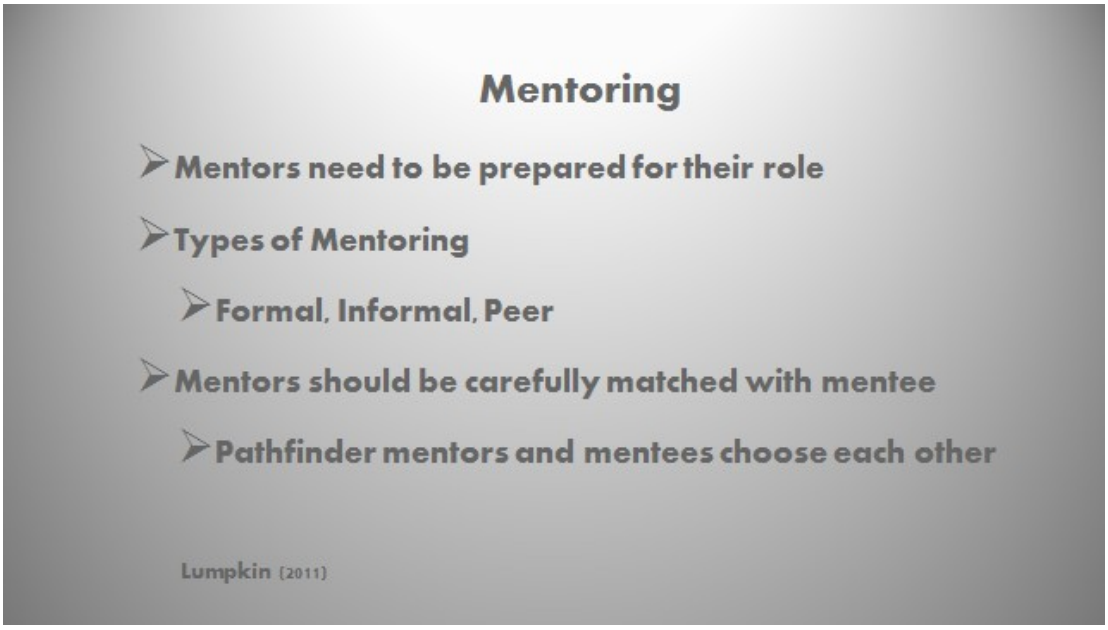
As a mentor it is important to understand where the learner has been and what their priorities are. Reflection is necessary in order to turn experiences into understandings, and a mentor should help support reflection. Feedback is necessary to help guide students. Feedback ranges from constructive criticism to positive reinforcement.

Mentors assist with strategies to assist mentees to gain problem solving skills. Listening is not passive. Mentors need to give their mentees undivided attention, make eye contact, pay attention to your mentees facial expression as they talk. Make sure that you acknowledge your mentee so that they know you are listening. Give respect.



Activity #10 Readiness Survey Fill out the survey, discuss with a partner, whole group discussion.

Activity #11 Role Playing, Participants will break into small groups (5-7). They will receive a set of scenario cards, one person will select a card, and will role play what is on the card. One other person in the group will play the mentor. Everyone in the group will have a chance to participate in the role play. Others in the group will take notes about what they are observing. Whole group will discuss.



According to Lumpkin (2011) mentors are more engaged and effective if they are prepared to meet the needs of their mentees. Formal: structured, time limited with assigned mentors. Informal: spontaneous, flexible, and no structure constraints. Peer: equal in position.

Read slide. Discuss with group: what other barriers are there?, how can we overcome these barriers?

Activity #12 Reflections will be written in journals.

Facilitators will wrap-up with a summary of the days learning. Ask for any questions and hand out the evaluation for Day 3.

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Evaluation

Please take a few moments to fill out the following evaluation - Day 3

SPONSORS R US.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1. I found the content to be relevant.						
2. My knowledge of Mentors has increased.						
3. The information learned today will assist me with sponsoring and mentoring future students' projects and also in my classroom (faculty).						
4. The information learned about mentoring today will assist me when I become a sponsor.						
5. The facilitator of the PDP was interesting and knowledgeable.						

What did you like about this PDP?

What did you not like about this PDP?

How would you improve this PDP?

What questions do you still have about Sponsors R Us?

Appendix B: Interview Guide

1. Of the six project categories, which category did you choose?

2. What was your motivation for choosing that particular category?

3. What characteristics do you have that helped you to successfully develop your project?

4. In applying those characteristics, what strategies did you use to move forward with your project?

5. What motivated you to work on a proposal?

6. When making the decision to propose a project, what goals did you set for yourself?

7. What specifically did you do to accomplish the goals that you set?

8. What assistance did you receive while developing your project?

9. While you were completing your project, what assistance did you receive from your faculty sponsor?

10. What have you gained from this experience that will help you in college and beyond?

11. What advice would you give to other students who have not started the program process yet?

Appendix C: Permission to Reprint

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