

NMSU ACE Partners Freshman Mentoring Program

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ACE Partner Program

In recognizing that the transition into the university setting can be overwhelming for our new freshmen students, the Division of Student Affairs has developed the retention program, ACE Partners. The ACE mentoring program offers a unique opportunity for new Aggies to connect with someone who can help them navigate the university environment. ACE pairs a new student with an NMSU faculty, staff, or alumni member with similar interests who knows the ropes and who can help with such challenges as developing academic skills, learning campus traditions, making new friends, getting involved in activities, deciding on a major, handling finances, resolving conflicts, and adjusting to college life. The main objective of ACE is to let our new students know that there is someone available to help them here on campus especially during the first few weeks of school. Since its inception in 1996 over 1,000 freshmen students have participated.

Overview

ACE Partners is a mentoring program for college freshmen, staffed by volunteers from the NMSU faculty, staff, and alumni. The main purpose of the program is to assist new students in their transition from high school to college. This goal is accomplished by pairing the student with a mentor who is an NMSU faculty/staff member. The program structure is designed to allow mentors to have latitude and flexibility in how they proceed with their outreach efforts. To maximize opportunities for quality contacts, most mentors typically receive no more than two ACE partners per year. The primary target population ACE works with is traditional age first-time Freshmen. Primary support is offered during the first few weeks of a student's college career, as that is typically the most critical time for new students. Contact then decreases as students become more acclimated and develop their own support bases.

The ACE Program is marketed to each prospective freshman student attending a summer New Student Orientation Program. See Pamphlet at URL address

http://www.NMSU.Edu/Campus_Life/ACE/public_html/acebro.pdf

The sign up process is simple and students are only asked to give identifying information and to share their hobbies, interests and intended majors. Based on this information, matches are made with mentors who have similar interests. Upon receiving an ACE partner mentors are asked to make three points of contact.

See mentor recruitment form at URL address

http://www.NMSU.Edu/Campus_Life/ACE/public_html/staffapp.pdf

The first, and sometimes most critical, contact usually occurs during the summer months prior to the student's arrival to NMSU for the fall semester. An outline of the suggested format for all contacts is provided below:

Contact 1 - One week to ten days after the mentor receives the assignment.

Suggestion: Establish contact, make introduction, answer questions, let student know how you can be contacted.

Contact 2 - First week of school

Suggestion: Make a face-to-face contact, answer additional questions and make sure the student can find the buildings where student's classes are scheduled. Invite the student to contact you if difficulties are encountered.

Contact 3 - At the end of the semester

Suggestion: Touch base to make sure the student's semester went smoothly.

Assessment At A Glance

Although data is still being collected and analyzed, the following represents general trends and observations. Since the inception of the program in 1996, student participation has averaged 250 freshmen per year. The overall average participation by gender is 60% female and 40% male. (This does not include students from the College of Ag and Home Economics because they have created their own version of the ACE Program). Thus far, a student's major does not seem to affect participation, however, there appears to be a fairly strong and consistent correlation between the timing of the New Student Orientation Program attended in the summer and the number of participants. The ACE Program tends to attract stronger interest and participation from those who attend the earliest New Student Orientation Program in the summer.

Future

The ACE program clearly appears to be fulfilling an important need for some of our new freshmen students. Program planning, review, and assessment will continue and comparisons between ACE and non-ACE students will include:

- credit hour production (primarily first semester)
- GPA (first semester)

- persistence (continuing on with second semester)
- student and mentor satisfaction

From a mentoring perspective, ongoing training opportunities, recruitment, and resource support availability will continue to be reviewed for more effective service delivery.

Further details will be provided during the presentation