

Intercultural Brokering Through Volunteer Peer Engagement Programs



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
INTERNATIONAL



**University
of Victoria**

International
Student Services



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Rules of engagement

- 1) Presume Goodwill - Everyone works from a set of positive values
 - 2) Common Sense (logic) is Cultural - People don't do things that they don't understand
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3) The intercultural conversation needs to be overt and purposely injected into every stage and level of a program

Shake on it!

A moment to wear someone else's shoes.



Challenges of Being in a Culturally New Environment

1. **Authenticity Challenge** -
Feeling “Fake”, or “Foreign”
1. **Competence Challenge**
Not able to perform to local norms
1. **Resentment Challenge** -
“I shouldn’t have to do this!”
2. **Likability Challenge** -
“They are all going to laugh at me!”
3. **Morality Challenge** -
“Can I maintain my cultural identity?”

Andy Molinsky, Brandeis University



Program Setup



IC Office

Staff Coordinator (Interculturalist)



Senior Mentors

Returning mentors who take on leadership roles in the program
(AKA Returning Peers, Returning Mentors, Training Peers)



Mentors

Mentors are upper-year undergraduate and graduate students who provide guidance to international students and help them get involved with our campus community

(AKA Peers, Senior Peers, Buddies)



Peers

International Students who are newly admitted into the university
(AKA new students, newcomers, exchange students, Jr. Peer, Jr. student)

Reciprocal Mentoring Program Goals & Learning Outcomes



- **Mentor Outcomes**
 - Intercultural Training to translate, work within and explain cultural dissonance, and to share perspectives.
 - Employability skills (e.g. Leadership, logistics, teamwork, planning, problem solving, coaching, referrals)
 - Recognition of Service (Reference, Certificate, CCR, Recommendation)
- **Peer Outcomes**
 - Access to a personal relationship with Intercultural Brokers
 - Build a sense of belonging and a connection to place
 - Ease transition into new environment
 - Help to understand and mitigate the 5 challenges
- **Reciprocal Mentoring**
 - Engagement with Intercultural Competencies
 - Application of Cross Cultural/Interpersonal Comm. Skills
 - Foster meaningful personal exchanges
- **Shared Outcomes**
 - Build a network and a greater connection to community
 - Cultivate Inclusive and Globally minded campus

Mentor Responsibilities



Mentors are expected to:

- **Contribute** to a globally mindful campus
- **Foster** inclusivity and integration
- **Assist** with transitions
- **Invite** participation
- **Provide** language resource and feedback
- **Refer** to Services and supports
- **Build** connections

Training Types



Online – Modules:

- Defining the Role of a Peer
- Campus and community resources and referral skills
- Volunteer expectations and roles of service
- Communication styles and cross cultural perceptions

Face to face trainings:

- Intercultural Awareness activities
- Communication activities
- Inclusivity and Diversity Discourse
- Mental Health awareness and support
- Explanation of system and avenues of support

Event Types



Events are held on and off campus, and are led by the International Office, campus offices, community partners and/or mentor planned and executed

Meet and Greet / Farewell - Kick-off and introductions to peers and policy and volunteer appreciation (International Office Run)

Community (Civic) Engagement - EG: Volunteer opportunities, community library events, government visits, collaborations with student and community groups

Cultural/Community Discovery - EG: Local sport teams, winter specific events (curling, skating, snowshoeing), hiking/camping, festivals, lectures, natural and aquatic parks, museums

Academic Opportunities - EG: Symposiums, conferences, Intercultural Career Workshops

Social/Networking - EG: Peer mentor led activities/events, pot Lucks, board game nights, soccer tournaments

Reporting, Assessment & Evaluation



- Weekly logs
- Photographs
- Stories from students and mentors
 - E-mail, in person, weekly logs, etc.
- Surveys to measure different aspects of the program: from matching to selection process satisfaction, if the resources and support they were provided were enough, the impact their participation had in their perspectives and lives.
- Virtual Campus course with modules and reflections related to cultural knowledge, adaptability, conflict resolution, etc.

Activity: Depth of Experience



Goals:

- 1) Ease Anxieties in Speaking about lived realities
- 2) Build Empathy and awareness of one's experiences
- 3) Develop awareness of differing perspectives

Questions will be read.

If you answer in the positive, please stand up.

If you answer in the negative, please sit down.



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Strengths & Challenges



Strengths

Our mentorship program is part of the UVic Global Community Initiative which was developed with a group of international students in 2013.

The GC is a mosaic of international, indigenous and domestic students, staff and faculty working together to celebrate diversity, advance intercultural competency and cultivate an inclusive and globally minded campus.

Facebook Group

Bi-weekly newsletter

Student Advisory Council

Conversation Partners Program

Holiday Dinner Program

Presentation, workshops and events

Challenges

Capacity to grow the program and maintain the current reporting structure and level of communication with mentors. UVic has a very large Chinese student population making it challenging to create diverse groups.



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Strengths & Challenges



Strengths

Remunerated staff vs. volunteers: 14 international student mentors help newly admitted students in all the aspects of university life. These have a lot of knowledge and training. Many resources are available to help peers more effectively in their volunteering experience.

Challenges

Matching process: too much manual work and long hours. Made 650 matches in the fall 2017 term manually. 350 domestic students and 650 international



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Strengths & Challenges



Strength

Our Program is framed by Intercultural Awareness from the beginning. With over 500 participants, we enjoy a wide range of experiences during our Mentor Lead events that help to engage students in cultural discourse, and contrast and compare with their own normals.

Intercultural Competencies are reinforced in every planning meeting and activity.

Challenge

With a larger program (500 ppl), and understanding that culture plays a critical role in how people interact, assessment of intercultural movement for each is difficult.

Discussion and Reflection



How can we highlight and label intercultural communication skills already practiced within a mentorship program?

How can we make intercultural opportunities more apparent, and encourage participants to engage in intercultural discourse out of our programs?

Resource Links

- Andrew Molinsky - 5 challenges

<https://www.inc.com/andy-molinsky/successful-people-overcome-these-5-challenges-to-stepping-outside-their-comfort-.html>

- UVic - the four intercultural Competencies:

https://www.uvic.ca/coopandcareer/assets/docs/student-docs/competencies/intercultural-competencies/intercultural_competencies.pdf

- Ualberta - Tips for Intercultural Adjustment Tips

<https://www.ualberta.ca/international-student-services/culture-and-lifestyle-guide/cultural-adjustment>

- Geert Hofstede Insights

<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/>



Please feel free to contact us!

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