

# Leadership Education for College and Career Readiness: The CAMP Osprey Mentoring Program

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## Abstract

This article describes a program that combines meaningful community-based experiential learning for collegiate students with leadership-based mentoring, delivered either face-to-face or virtually, that helps K–12 students see college as an option for their future. The CAMP (Collegiate Achievement Mentoring Program) model is a partnership between institutions of higher education and K–12 schools, in which collegiate student mentors are paired with children in high-poverty K–12 schools to improve leadership and career-readiness skills for collegiate mentors and leadership and college-readiness skills for mentees. The CAMP model has positively impacted the academic and social outcomes of more than 1,500 student mentors and mentees in four states. This article describes the genesis, development, process, and outcomes of the CAMP Osprey program at the University of North Florida as a model for other educational institutions to replicate and adapt to meet the needs of their students. The program is readily replicable and is notable among mentoring models because it is based on leadership development and can be delivered virtually.

## Introduction

Nationally, the number of effective student-centered resources and support structures available to at-risk K–12 students is declining (Corbett, Wilson, & Williams, 2002; Darling-Hammond, Zieleski, & Goldman, 2014). In contrast, the need for authentic, experiential service-based learning is increasing as a method for addressing recruitment and retention of college students (Kuh, 2008). To address both national concerns, CAMP Osprey provides a forum for collegiate mentors to learn leadership skills and teach them to K–12 students through a comprehensive mentoring partnership. Collegiate mentors and K–12 mentees engage in small group mentoring and participate in immersive on-campus events while mentors and mentees develop and practice the leadership skills needed to become college and career ready. CAMP Osprey at the University of North Florida (UNF) is based on a framework that has been implemented at the University of Florida's Collegiate Achievement Mentoring, known as CAMP Gator, and North Carolina State University's CAMP Pack (Ohlson, 2009). With each iteration, the CAMP program has adapted to meet the diverse leadership and learning needs of its partners.

CAMP Osprey is a partnership among university entities; public school systems; individual schools, principals, and teachers; and most importantly, the collegiate mentors and K–12 mentees themselves. All of the partners participate in collective leadership of the direction and operation of the program. Literature regarding the aspects of our mentoring model follows.

## Mentoring in an Educational Context

Mentoring is an effective strategy to prepare students to advance from secondary to post-secondary educational institutions (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 2000) or the workplace. Mentoring serves the interests and needs of mentees, mentors, community organizations and businesses (Klinge, 2015; Pidgeon, Archibald, & Hawkey, 2014), and helps mentees develop and hone their mental tools, enhance academic skill sets, and prepare for the complexities of life (Klinge, 2015). Mentees view advice and instruction from mentors as validation of what was taught at home and school, and they apply that learning to the workplace and community. For mentors, the relationship with their mentees allows for sharing of failures and successes, which are imperative for learners to formulate their understanding of the complexities of life (Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy, & Kram, 2012; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Klinge, 2015).

## *Virtual Mentoring*

Most mentoring research has concerned face-to-face mentoring, but virtual mentoring has received recent attention. In some of the earliest research, Knouse (2001), exploring videoconferencing technology for communication between mentor and mentee (Bierema & Merriam, 2002), discussed how members of a virtual team could mentor one another. As technology developed, NASA's Digital Learning Network (DLN) incorporated technology into an innovative Virtual Visits (VV) program, which employed

subject matter experts to e-mentor K–12 students on the DLN’s website (Long & Close, 2012), thus meeting K–12 students’ increasing need to access mentors who were experts in various fields of study.

Virtual mentoring has been shown to build relationships and foster collaboration between individuals in remote locations (Bierema & Merriam, 2002). In addition, virtual mentoring was found to be an effective tool for training and learning new skills (Seabrooks, Kenney, & LaMontagne, 2000; Ohlson & Froman, 2012). A powerful aspect of virtual mentoring is that the cultural baggage and stereotypes that accompany race, gender, and social class become less obvious in a virtual forum and make mentoring the focus, allowing for better communication and collaboration (Bierema & Merriam, 2002). For example, harnessing videoconferencing tools such as virtual field trips, file uploads, and the chat/text feature can engage auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners, as well as both introverts and extroverts with varying levels of comfort speaking/collaborating in groups.

#### *Community-Based Experiential Learning*

Higher education institutions that focus on community-based learning are increasingly being recognized (Lee, Kane, & Cavanaugh, 2015). Community-based learning serves as a valuable experiential learning opportunity that can take the form of projects in the community, structured activities, volunteerism, and assorted methods of engaged learning (Mooney & Edwards, 2001). An added benefit of community-based learning is that such engagement can extend outside the context of course content (Cavanaugh, 2006; Lee, Kane, & Cavanaugh, 2015). Appropriately structured projects provide students with opportunities to apply academic skills and knowledge to needs of the community, and a critical aspect of such projects is the opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences and make meaning of them (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Lee, Bush, & Smith, 2005; Lee, Kane, & Cavanaugh, 2015). Such opportunities allow “ideal time for students to use critical thinking skills to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what they have learned” (Lee, Bush, & Smith, 2005, p. 12). Such academic experiences can serve as catalysts for lifelong learning and professional development (Lee, Kane, & Gregg, 2016).

#### *Mentoring as a Catalyst for Collective Leadership*

In many educational settings, lack of resources prompts stakeholders to look to collective support

from a variety of sources (Bryan, 2005). Collective leadership is based on the belief that those closest to an issue are best qualified to effect systemic and sustainable change. Participants in the collective leadership process form a developmental network that functions as the nexus for service and learning objectives. Success in collective leadership and developmental networks hinges on an understanding of the intra- and inter-personal dynamics that make relationships work (Fullan, 2007). Collective leadership lends itself to identifying, initiating, developing, and sustaining developmental networks to implement community-based initiatives. The necessity of collective community leadership through developmental networks is best synopsised in the African proverb: “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.”

#### **Genesis of the CAMP Model**

Designing, implementing, and evaluating a new collegiate mentoring program presents many challenges. Being prepared for such challenges can make development of a program quicker and smoother for everyone involved. Depending on the community, the stakeholders involved, and the type of mentoring program and its stage of development, different challenges may arise. The development of CAMP Osprey at UNF benefited from the author’s experience with prior programs at the University of Florida’s CAMP Gator and NC State University’s CAMP Pack (Ohlson, 2009).

#### *CAMP Gator*

At the University of Florida, CAMP Gator operated between 2008 and 2014, with a one-year hiatus in 2011–2012. The program was based on a leadership curriculum, with students in a leadership course serving as mentors as an integral part of their course curriculum and embedded experiential learning. CAMP Gator began as a face-to-face program, with virtual mentoring added later to accommodate demand. In five years of operation, over 300 mentors served more than 1,100 students in grades four–nine in seven partner schools. Because UF is located in central Florida, the partner schools were primarily suburban and rural. Data demonstrated a remarkable improvement in public speaking, goal setting, and leadership skills for collegiate mentors (Ohlson, 2009; Ohlson & Quinn, 2010), including a 72% decrease in suspensions, 13% increase in GPA, and 22% increase in attendance for K–12 mentees (Ohlson, 2009; Ohlson & Quinn, 2010).

The strategies learned at UF, including the use of a leadership curriculum embedded throughout the mentoring process, along with the addition of virtual mentoring, are foundational elements of the current, CAMP Osprey program at UNF.

### CAMP Pack

CAMP Pack operated for one academic year, 2011–2012. Student athletes and student leaders served as mentors in a leadership-based (but not course-based) volunteer program that was entirely face-to-face, and which served just one elementary school. The 50 fourth and fifth grade mentees were students at the AB Combs Leadership Magnet School in Raleigh, and the group represented diversity in terms of racial, socio-economic, and academic achievement levels. Even in the short time that the program was in existence, mentees improved attendance by 18% and GPA by 5%. Extracted from this iteration of the CAMP model was the importance of developing a strong relationship with a school, in this case, a single site where we could focus on design, implementation, and evaluation efforts when resources were limited.

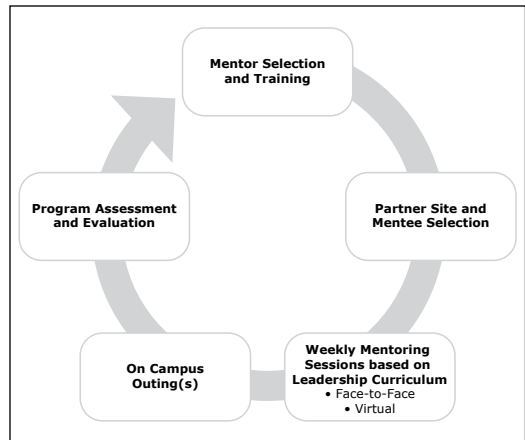
### Development and Implementation of CAMP Osprey

CAMP Osprey was launched at UNF in fall 2015 with mentors drawn from a leadership course. Initially, all mentoring interactions were face-to-face. As the program developed, student athletes and student leaders were added to the mentoring team (2016–2017), and virtual mentoring was added to accommodate more distant schools. CAMP Osprey differs from its predecessors in the diversity of the K–12 partners, which include rural, suburban, and urban; high-poverty and affluent; and charter and traditional public schools. The program processes and details are described in the sections that follow and summarized in Figure 1.

#### Mentor Selection & Training

**Leadership mentor selection.** Initially, all of the mentors were students in an Introduction to Leadership course that is the foundational course in UNF’s Leadership Minor, housed in the College of Education and Human Services (COEHS) in partnership with the Taylor Leadership Institute. The course is taken by students from a variety of majors, and the students in the course are more ethnically and racially diverse (52% nonwhite) than those in any other courses within COEHS (29%) and UNF (33%) as a whole. Students who

**Figure 1.** CAMP Osprey Program Processes



enroll in the designated section understand that leadership mentoring is a required and graded component of the course.

**Collegiate mentor training.** For students enrolled in the foundational Introduction to Leadership course, leadership mentoring constitutes a substantial portion of the course curriculum. The first phase of the course teaches students the characteristics of effective leadership and leadership best practices from seminal texts such as Covey’s (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* and Kotter’s (1996) *Leading change*.

**Leading change.** Topics of study during the course include preparing a personal mission and vision, aligning actions with values, finding one’s voice and strengths, time management, and workplace etiquette, including appropriate dress and behavior.

Early in the course, mentors participate in eight hours of face-to-face training with the course instructor, specifically focused on best practices for leadership mentoring and the practicalities of mentor-mentee interaction. Outlines and deliverables of weekly mentoring sessions are laid out in a written mentoring guide (Ohlson & Buenaño, 2018).

The training program is unique in that mentors not only learn important leadership skills, but also teach them to their mentees, thereby reinforcing their own learning. Student athletes and volunteers not enrolled in the course receive a condensed version of mentor training. Mentors are trained in student and school safety strategies to ensure the well-being of the program and all participants.

#### Partners Site and Mentee Selection

Partner schools are selected based on a variety of criteria including proximity to UNF (for

our face-to-face mentoring component), age of students (grades four to eight have seen the largest gains based on previous iterations of the model, Ohlson, 2013) and investment in the program as demonstrated by the commitment of at least one staff member who will help monitor the mentoring sessions and serve as a dedicated liaison between the university and each school site.

The three iterations of the CAMP program have had over 30 partner schools in four states. More than 70% of all K–12 mentees are from high poverty households and 64% are from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds. In the 2016–2017 academic year, UNF partnered with schools in its home county of Duval (FL), in addition to St. Johns and Miami-Dade (FL), rural schools in Flagler and Putnam (FL) and Wake (NC) counties, and Milford Independent School District (TX).

The individual K–12 students who participate are selected by their teachers and school administrators because they are perceived to have potential, but to be at risk of underachieving based on personal difficulties. For example, a student who was doing well academically before her parents went through a divorce or a star athlete who is struggling academically would be candidates for inclusion. Mentoring matches between mentor and mentee and the academic performance of both are monitored by school and CAMP Osprey staff through monthly “check-ins” (described in the next section) to ensure the process is having the greatest impact on students.

Not every school is a fit for the program, and schools have been asked to leave the mentoring network based on the fidelity of our process and the level of support necessary. For example, we no longer offer mentoring services to a school because they did not provide adequate learning space, opting to place our students in a crowded hallway which proved unfavorable to both virtual and face-to-face mentoring. Other schools have failed to provide sufficient supervision of mentoring sessions and effectively communicate schedule changes. We first attempt to address such situations with open communication, but with continued issues, we must put the safety of the students and fidelity of the program first and end the mentoring partnership with that school.

#### *Weekly Mentoring Sessions Based on Leadership Curriculum*

**Face-to-face mentoring.** Weekly mentoring sessions take place at the partner schools and

last for 60 minutes, with each mentoring group consisting of one collegiate mentor and two or three K–12 mentees. Mentoring sessions are supervised by K–12 staff and, when possible, by a member of the UNF program team. Activities are scripted in the mentoring guide and focus on leadership development and college and career readiness skills. The mentoring sessions use a leadership development curriculum based on Covey’s *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989) and a best practice mentoring guide developed by a cadre of mentors during the nine years of the program (Ohlson & Buenaño, 2018). Mentoring sessions consist of relationship building, a leadership activity, establishing and monitoring the achievement of personal goals, creating time management plans, and learning life skills and college and career readiness.

Working together, both collegiate mentors and K–12 mentees create personal mission statements and leadership portfolios. From learning how to prioritize daily activities and properly shake someone’s hand, to modeling positive behaviors, mentors and mentees develop strong, meaningful relationships.

**Virtual mentoring.** When possible, the mentoring sessions are face to face, but when distance is a factor, for example with rural partner schools, mentoring meetings take place via videoconferencing and follow the same structure as face-to-face sessions. With the support of UNF’s Center for Instruction & Research Technology and Cisco Technologies, collegiate mentors and K–12 mentees in distant partner schools communicate in real-time, share files using Google Drive and Dropbox (based on district preference) and participate in virtual field trips facilitated by a UNF faculty or staff member who travels to the partner school. In the first semester of virtual mentoring (spring 2016), to accommodate technology limitations, as many as 10–12 mentees might be present in one mentoring session, facilitated by four to six mentors. In the second academic year, a single mentoring session was limited to two mentors and four to six mentees, with the two groups alternating in their use of the connection. Expansion to virtual mentoring increased the total number of mentees, as well as access for high-need student groups. When virtual mentoring was implemented, the percentage of mentees and the numbers of Latino and high-poverty rural mentees increased by 44%, 29%, and 38% respectively.

### *On-Campus Outings*

Periodically, when distance is not a prohibitive factor, K–12 mentees come to UNF for activities such as talking to a faculty member, participating in a soccer or art clinic, or having their mentor show them a lab, a residence hall room, or the lazy river or climbing wall. Leadership development is as comprehensive as possible; for example, campus visits have at times been preceded by mentors taking their mentees shopping for clothes so they can look professional and feel comfortable on campus. Such campus visits are important because when students gain familiarity with a college campus, there is an increased likelihood that they will consider going to college (King, 2012), and perhaps consider UNF as a future collegiate home. Such recruiting also benefits UNF as it seeks to expand its reach to underrepresented communities. At the end of the semester, the collegiate mentors and the K–12 mentees together present their leadership portfolios at the K–12 mentees' school.

### *Program Assessment and Evaluation*

Throughout the CAMP Osprey mentoring process, stakeholders from each partner school, including administration and teachers, participate in monthly planning meetings where they have the opportunity to offer suggestions, feedback, and ways that the program could be improved. CAMP Osprey program staff attend these planning meetings as a means to learn from and with the adults who know the student mentees in hopes of creating the most advantageous leadership opportunities. For example, one school adapted their mentoring activities to incorporate an entrepreneurship theme while another school asked to include more writing within the activities to address student learning needs. In addition, these meetings also allow for robust data collection and analysis to determine program effectiveness and needed adaptations. This sharing of information and outcomes has also resulted in the CAMP Osprey model being recognized with numerous awards, grants, publications, and presentations based on the program outcomes and process of implementation.

The long-term goals of UNF's CAMP Osprey are to increase UNF student graduation rates and to increase the likelihood that at-risk youth will attend college. Desired outcomes for collegiate mentors are development and application of leadership skills, and improved personal outcomes (academic, athletic, etc.) as college students. Desired outcomes for K–12 mentees are improved academic achievement, attendance, and discipline in their

current school settings. To examine the alignment between the intended goals and program outcomes, we examined a variety of variables for mentor and mentee on an ongoing basis and use these results to continuously improve the model.

In its first year (2015–2016), 25 CAMP Osprey collegiate participants mentored 50 K–12 children in the local (Duval County, FL) public schools. In its second year (2016–2017), 40 mentors worked with 75 mentees in nine schools, face-to-face in Duval and St. Johns (FL) and virtually in Miami-Dade, Flagler and Putnam (FL) and Wake (NC) County schools. The diversity of participating schools (urban and rural; regular public and charter schools; mainly high-poverty but one [St. Johns] relatively affluent) and the growth in participation show that we are beginning to address our goals of increased participation and diversity of both students and partner schools.

**Mentor results.** At the end of the spring 2017 semester, collegiate mentors were asked to respond with up to five answers to a single question: "How have you grown because of this leadership mentoring experience?" The survey was administered to both the mentors enrolled in the leadership class and those from the athletic teams. All 98 mentors responded to the survey. Content analysis on survey responses (Figure 2) revealed that the most frequently mentioned words were as follows: leadership (35 mentions); positive (31), listen better and collaboration (17 each); learn (9); goals and grown (8); involvement (7); and community and patience, (6 each).

Reflections included in the mentors' leadership portfolios provided insight into mentors' experiences. One mentor identified the value of relationships by stating:

**Figure 2.** Most Frequently Mentioned Words



Having a mentor, someone you can ask questions about whatever, someone you can trust in, is really important in this society because that person will help you be successful in every area of your life. I learned that I don't have to be perfect to be a mentor. I just have to be supporting and help them be the best leader that they can be. I hope that in the future my mentees can achieve that. That would be a dream come true.

The value of the ability to positively influence was also recognized. One mentor said, "Knowing that we can have an influence on kids and knowing how cool they probably think it is means a lot to us. It really does make a difference." Another mentor articulated that the positive influence was a two-way street, noting:

Seeing my mentee's success and talking to her about her goals led me to become more confident in my abilities. I am not as scared to speak up in class or on the track. I also have a new understanding for varying communities, as this was an exposure vastly different from my hometown.

Appreciation of diversity was another theme. Using Covey's (1989) 5th Habit "Seek first to understand, then be understood" (p. 247–248) as the foundation of this leadership development theme, students were immersed in learning about many of the challenges facing the students in our partner schools including high poverty, excessive mobility in the migrant farm populations within the rural context, and the school violence that often permeated the school environments with our urban school partners. Another essential element in this process was the mutual learning and understanding that took place when our UNF students were required to immerse themselves in the learning environment of their mentee. Therefore, the college students were able to see the school, classrooms, and even the surrounding neighborhood of their mentee. One mentor shared that:

My students were of all different ethnic, social, political, religious, and economic backgrounds. They have developed an understanding that they are functional citizens in our community and they are capable of much more than they are told.... I have learned that although we

all come from different backgrounds, if we work together as a community, we can all succeed. Before this program, I never knew how a normal student like me could make such an impact in my community but I now know that I can, one mentee at a time.

The impact of CAMP Osprey on the collegiate mentors is possibly best conveyed by the words of one mentor who stated:

I walked out of this program a completely different person from who I was when I walked in. I will never forget the memories I made there and how much I learned about not only myself, but also what I want to do with my life. This mentoring program has helped me grow as a person and has absolutely made me a better person. I can't wait to continue on with this program and further mold myself into the leader I want to be.

Collegiate mentors self-reported increased leadership acumen and enhanced ability to apply leadership principles including an improved ability to manage their time, an increased awareness of ways to work with others (including those from different cultures), and a stronger understanding of how to define and work toward goals that align with their interests and passions. It is too early to assess impacts on UNF collegiate mentors with respect to academic and career outcomes, but we expect to see effects on grades, retention rates, graduation rates, and continuing involvement in community outreach. Future data will hopefully continue to show that students learn how to be leaders most effectively by showing and doing rather than merely writing and reading in a class.

**Mentee results.** Both virtual and face-to-face-mentored groups demonstrated improvement in attendance (8%) and GPA (3%), with no significant difference in the magnitude of the gains between the two groups in the first year of CAMP Osprey. However, substantially more of the virtually mentored students (9%) improved their GPAs in the second year, compared to the face-to-face-mentored students (4%). These gains, compared to their face-to-face-mentored peers, were based on the student comfort level using technology and communicating in a virtual environment compared to a face-to-face setting (Barnwell, 2014; Ohlson, Ehrlich, Lerman, & Pascale, 2017).

Mentee reflections were collected from their leadership portfolios. The credibility of mentors, simply by virtue of their position being “educated” college students, was attested by one mentee who stated, “They’re in college so they can tell you what to look forward to and how hard you have to work [to succeed].”

The recognition of improvement was pointed out by one mentee who stated, “I’m going to miss CAMP Osprey. My grades have gone up since I joined you guys and I am a better leader now.” Another mentee shared a similar notion: “I feel more confident when I talk to adults and my teachers because of CAMP Osprey, and I’ve been doing better in school and getting in trouble a lot less.” An additional aspect of recognized improvement was conveyed by a mentee who reflected:

I see how my classmates treat each other better than they did before and I think we all get along better in school because our mentors have been working with us on how to be more positive about ourselves and others.

The notion of increased optimism about the future was shared by one mentee: I’ll be sad when I don’t see my mentor every week anymore because she taught me about what I can look forward to in college and we talked about the things I can start doing now to help me get there.” Another mentee expressed gratitude for being included in the program: “I was so glad I was picked for this program because it has helped me a lot to grow and be a better leader and student all around. Thank you CAMP Osprey!”

In CAMP Osprey, teachers and principals reported that K–12 mentees demonstrated improvements in attendance (7% decrease in excessive absences), behavior (4% decrease in suspensions), and academic achievement (9% gain in student GPA) (Ohlson, Lerman, Theobald, & Jamison, 2017). Future examination of factors such as attendance, retention, graduation rates, and college attendance rates are expected to help schools at all levels inform their organizational policies and practices.

### **Lessons Learned**

With the benefit of hindsight over three iterations of CAMP programs, we offer these suggestions for success. In our experience, a mentoring program is more likely to achieve its goals if it incorporates some key features.

**Get support from as many sources as possible.** The first CAMP program in 2008 coincided with a period of austere educational budgets and many contended that there was not enough money to start a new initiative. We embedded the mentoring activities in a college course and reduced travel costs by partnering with schools close to campus and virtually mentoring more distant schools. Strait (2009) pointed out that service-learning efforts can be adapted to online formats in order to keep up with changes in higher education and offered best practices for using Service-eLearning. In our case, we implemented a virtual strategy to help address economic issues by making use of IT resources from our university. We also successfully coordinated with the admissions office to arrange campus visits by arguing that this program serves as a powerful college recruiting tool.

Because we needed additional resources that were not available at the university, we reached out to various organizations for sponsorship. In collaboration with our development office, to avoid overlap communicating to potential donors, we reached out to potential sponsors based on alignment with their business areas. For example, a local fitness center sponsored the T-shirts for an on-campus tennis clinic and a local restaurant sponsored a healthy-eating session in collaboration with the collegiate health and nutrition faculty. These funding strategies harnessed university resources and helped to meet the changing needs of the students to ensure a seamless, meaningful, experiential learning program for the students both on and off campus (Lima, 2009).

When reaching out for sponsors, we also asked that these business leaders take part in the program by speaking to our collegiate mentors on the power of leadership in their own life or business. This strategy proved to be an exponentially effective process as the financial resources helped with our immediate needs, but the leadership lessons shared by these community and business leaders helped to inform our collegiate mentors for future successes.

**Positive branding.** Initially, many university, school district, and community stakeholders suggested that there was no need for a mentoring program because one was already available in the community (e.g., Big Brothers, Big Sisters, a nationwide nonprofit mentoring program). We researched mentoring programs and found numerous ways that they could be improved, including increased accountability for the mentors (with mentoring linked to a course grade); clear

mentoring goals, outcomes, and activities (embedded in a leadership curriculum); and shared on-campus experiences to build relationships. We assessed the program, and used the program website [www.camposprey.org](http://www.camposprey.org) and social media to communicate its impact using our Twitter site [https://twitter.com/UNF\\_CAMP\\_OSPREY](https://twitter.com/UNF_CAMP_OSPREY). We started small and then celebrated the leadership and learning outcomes achieved by students.

**Adaptability.** Planning and implementing a program can take years. In a university setting, students and others involved may not be around long enough to help in the entire process. We worked with college faculty and advisors to create an efficient process to train mentors and maintain the fidelity of their leadership development. To accommodate the schedules of K–12 mentees and staff, we sought their input and developed customized schedules for mentoring sessions, including before and after school and the ever-popular working lunch.

**Less is more.** For CAMP Pack, we initiated the program in just one K–12 school. Although the program did not continue due to the departure of the director (see the next item), this program displayed a high fidelity of implementation and was the easiest for staff inexperienced in the program to manage. In contrast, when the UNF program expanded from three to 12 K–12 partner schools, supervision of the programs at individual schools suffered and the model was not always implemented according to the original concept. For those starting their own program, consider starting small with one to three sites and refine the process to meet the unique needs of each site, while constantly communicating the impact of the program to school and community stakeholders. As the process is adapted, then expansion may take place, ensuring the fidelity of the process, products and outcomes can be maintained with the human and financial resources.

**Plan for succession.** At both UF and NC State, when the program director left the university, the program disintegrated. The program budget and staffing model must include an adaptable and comprehensive succession plan for the program to continue after its initial champion moves on (Charan, 2005).

**Plan for assessment.** Funders, supervisors, and potential publication venues will all want to see evidence of efficacy. We recommend meeting with an assessment professional at the beginning of the planning process to ensure that data needed to demonstrate effectiveness will be consistently collected.

**Incorporate and maintain a high degree of structure.** An intentional curriculum for mentor training and the mentoring sessions; clearly defined outcomes for each mentoring session; and close monitoring of fidelity of implementation to ensure consistent structure, schedule, and format of each session are key to achieving program objectives. The curriculum of mentor training and the mentoring session should regularly reinforce, through program design and activities, leadership lessons such as time management, consistent communication, and goal setting. Although a successful program could focus on different content, leadership lends itself beautifully to the development of desired education, career, and life skills on the part of both mentors and mentees.

**Engage students and build relationships.** An initial mistake we made was focusing on content to the exclusion of student engagement and mentor-mentee relationships. K–12 students, especially in virtual mentoring sessions, often became passive observers as leadership content was “delivered” by their mentors. Collegiate mentors are not experienced teachers and need to be explicitly coached in leading engaging student-centered activities and relationship building. A balance must be struck between structure and content fidelity on the one hand, and engagement activities on the other. We improved engagement by reducing the length and increasing the number of mentoring sessions (from one 45-minute session per week to two 30-minute sessions, divided into 10-minute blocks); adding a requirement for hands-on learning and movement in every session; and reducing the maximum number of participants per virtual session (from 12 to eight mentees, facilitated by two mentors). Relationship building strategies include learning and using names; reporting each week on progress on individual weekly goals; and requiring mentors to document and encourage the successes of each of their mentees.

**Incorporate campus visits.** In order to achieve the program objective of motivating K–12 students to consider attending college, campus visits are a hugely important and successful motivational tool. From an initial schedule of one campus visit per semester, we have increased to two to three visits per semester. These collegiate visits have included such activities as a campus scavenger hunt, question-and-answer sessions with college faculty, financial aid seminars with admissions staff, campus dorms tours, classroom visits, soccer and tennis clinics with college athletic coaches, public speaking training sessions in collegiate lecture



halls, nature hikes with science faculty, attending sporting events, and eating in the college dining hall. It is imperative that communication and collaboration between various departments take place prior to these visits to ensure compliance and mutually beneficial outcomes with admissions, enrollment students/academic services, and athletics. For example, our admission department has been instrumental in coordinating aspects of the campus visits as we are helping to bring underrepresented populations to campus, thus meeting their need of outreach to these students and their schools.

When considering the costs for these meaningful events, one strategy we implemented was sharing the responsibility using a collaborative approach. For example, we now ask that schools arrange for their own transportation to and from their K–12 school which helps offset costs and eliminates the issues related to legal liability during transportation of students. Once on campus we have sought the support of dining services, the admissions office, the instructional technology department, athletics, and even various faculty to support the program in terms of time or resources including campus tours, classroom visits, athletic training clinics and technology demonstrations. Ultimately, this serves to meet the community outreach and engagement goals of the university in a way that is controlled and manageable for all involved.

## **Conclusion**

Exemplary academic programs teach students content and allow students the opportunity to put this content and their skills into action (Storch & Ohlson, 2009). The CAMP Osprey curriculum focuses on student-centered leadership training, experiential learning opportunities, and a cycle of engagement between mentors and mentees. The model creates a learning environment in which theory and practice are integrated, allowing students the opportunity to teach and practice the leadership theories and techniques learned in class. CAMP Osprey requires collegiate student mentors to complete a comprehensive leadership and personal development curriculum that includes the development of personal mission and vision statements, goal planning journals, and strategies to bring out the best in themselves and others. Such experiential learning opportunities help a student determine what they hope to achieve after graduation and obtain the skills, motivation, and opportunities to reach those goals (Storch & Ohlson, 2009).

CAMP Osprey collegiate mentors are diverse in terms of gender, race, age, sexuality, majors, and career interests. More than 52% of mentors and 84% of mentees have been from underrepresented groups, and are reflective of the demographic groups that are sorely needed in today's workforce and on college campuses. For 56% of collegiate mentors, this was their first experience working with high-poverty schools in which minorities are the majority. The CAMP program facilitates learning and collaboration between diverse groups in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, and income and embraces the notion of synergy within a leadership context. The demographics of the student mentors may also help address a need for minority students in the fields of education, public service, and leadership. On a national level, the number of educators whose racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds match those of their students is declining (Ingersoll & May, 2011). By developing a flexible, student-centered program that introduces the field of education, CAMP Osprey may increase minority recruitment into the field.

To overcome geographic and financial barriers faced by high-poverty urban and rural partners, CAMP Osprey harnesses virtual leadership mentoring via videoconferencing technology available on the college campus to host weekly mentoring sessions. Collegiate mentors who participated in virtual mentoring articulated an initial lack of understanding of the challenges facing high-poverty, rural students. Many collegiate mentors shared that the virtual mentoring experience, which gave them access to distant partners, exposed them to the stark realities, including poverty, that face many communities beyond the city of Jacksonville. The virtual mentoring component of CAMP Osprey also provides a model for collaboration, demonstrating the power of technology to connect student leaders regardless of geographic and logistical barriers.

The CAMP Osprey program provides a replicable model for other collegiate learning environments. Because leadership development is applicable across disciplines, this collegiate mentor model is highly replicable. Participation is not limited to students in a particular course and can involve students who are meeting requirements in other courses and accruing extracurricular service hours for sports, Greek organizations, etc. Students either register for course credit or volunteer, so there is no cost for mentor time. The relatively low costs can be supported by donations (for example, clothing for campus visits provided by a local clothing

retailer), and the campus and K–12 schools' technology resources and students' own technology are adequate for the virtual interaction. The major cost is for an adequate administrative structure, primarily a program director. Additional staffing can consist of graduate students or college staff. The model has been equally successful across a wide variety of K–12 school settings.

The challenges shared here illustrate the complexities organizations face when looking at design and implementation strategies. Our use of a leadership curriculum, comprehensive mentor training, face-to-face and virtual mentoring, and student progress monitoring emerged from a trial and error process that helped to make our program more efficient, cost-effective, and replicable across different educational contexts and regions. As a low-cost initiative that benefits students at all levels from a variety of backgrounds, CAMP Osprey serves as an exemplar for those searching for ways to forge learning community partnerships to enhance academic excellence, student engagement, and equity in K–20 settings.

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