

NM
STATE

Shannon Norris, Shelly Sitton, Marshall Baker
*New Mexico State University &
Oklahoma State University*



Who is your **Most Influential** Mentor?



Photo: Wynn Canyon, NM, Summer 1999

Introduction

- ▶ Today's undergraduate students are labeled one of the most “lost” generations (Elmore & Maxwell, 2008).
- ▶ Understanding when and where students seek guidance could help educators create more intentional, individualized programs for each student (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005).
- ▶ Understanding how students seek mentorship leads to a desire for additional research (Pascarella, 2006).



Photo: OSU Agricultural Communications Services, 2014

Problem Statement

- ▶ More than 70 percent of Americans will attend a four-year college, but less than two-thirds will graduate (Porter, 2013).
- ▶ The first year is labeled as the most critical year for ensuring student retention in college programs (Yorke & Longden, 2004).
- ▶ One theory to motivating first-year college students to become engaged citizens and leaders is through the use of personal mentors (Terrion & Leonard, 2007).



Photo: NMSUACES Communications, 2016

Purpose

- ▶ Describe first-semester students' perceptions of their personal mentorship relationships.
- ▶ Focused at the beginning and end of the Fall 2014 AG 1011 – Freshmen Orientation class in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Oklahoma State University.



Photo: OSU Agricultural Communications Services, 2014

Research Objectives

1. Describe the selected characteristics (age, sex, and ethnicity) of incoming students in the Fall 2014 CASNR AG 1011 – Freshmen Orientation course.
2. Describe incoming students' classification of most influential mentors at the beginning and end of the Fall 2014 AG 1011 course.



Photo: NMSU ACES Communications, 2014

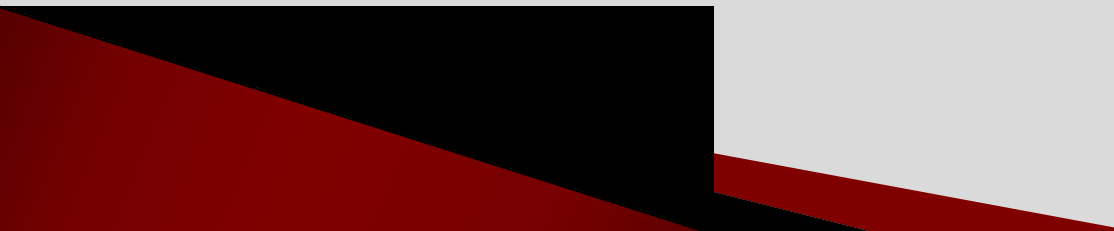
Literature Review

- ▶ The value of mentoring has long been recognized in practice, as well as, in research (Cohen, 1993).
- ▶ Hundreds of formalized programs and institutional practices include a mentoring component (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).
- ▶ Positive mentorship builds undergraduate motivation by stressing the value of the experience, contributing to academic goals, and encouraging engagement (Snowden & Hardy, 2012).



Theoretical Framework:

Theory of Servant Leadership

- ▶ “Servant first, leader second” (Greenleaf, 1977).
 - ▶ Servant leadership theory is mostly conceptual and anecdotal (Russell & Stone, 2002).
 - ▶ Used Van Dierendonck & Nuijten’s Approach - combined *leader* and *servant* into one measure (2011).
- 

Methodology

- ▶ Longitudinal, panel survey design with a census approach (Creswell, 2012).
 - Pre- and post-questionnaire administration.
- ▶ Researcher-designed general mentorship and demographic inventory questionnaire (Kimmelshue, 2012; Cramer, 2013).
- ▶ **Validity:**
 - A panel of 15 experts were hand-selected to assess face and content validity of the researcher-designed questionnaire (Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2009).



*Photo: OSU Agricultural
Communications Services, 2014*

Methodology

▶ Population:

- Incoming first-semester students enrolled in the Fall 2014 CASNR AG 1011 – Freshmen Orientation ($N = 485$).

▶ Response Rate:

- 436 students ($n = 485$) completed the pre-questionnaire = *89.9% response rate.*
- 404 students ($n = 485$) completed the post-questionnaire = *83.3% response rate.*



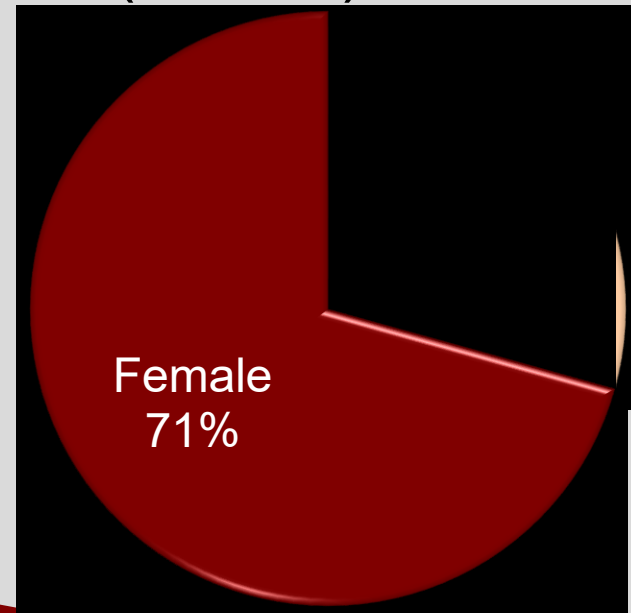
Photo: OSU Agricultural Communications Services, 2014

Findings

Objective 1: Personal Characteristics Age & Sex

- ▶ The mean age of respondents was 18.2 ($SD = .76$) where 369 students (84.6%) were 18 years old at the point of completing the pre-questionnaire.
- ▶ The population consisted of 127 (29.1%) males and 306 (70.2%) females.

Sex



Findings

Objective 1: Personal Characteristics Racial or Ethnic Group

Racial or Ethnic Group	<i>f</i>	%
Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)	361	83.6
Native American or Native Alaskan	27	6.3
Latino or Hispanic	15	3.5
African-American (Non-Hispanic)	7	1.6
Asian or Pacific Islander	5	1.2
Multi-Racial	17	3.9

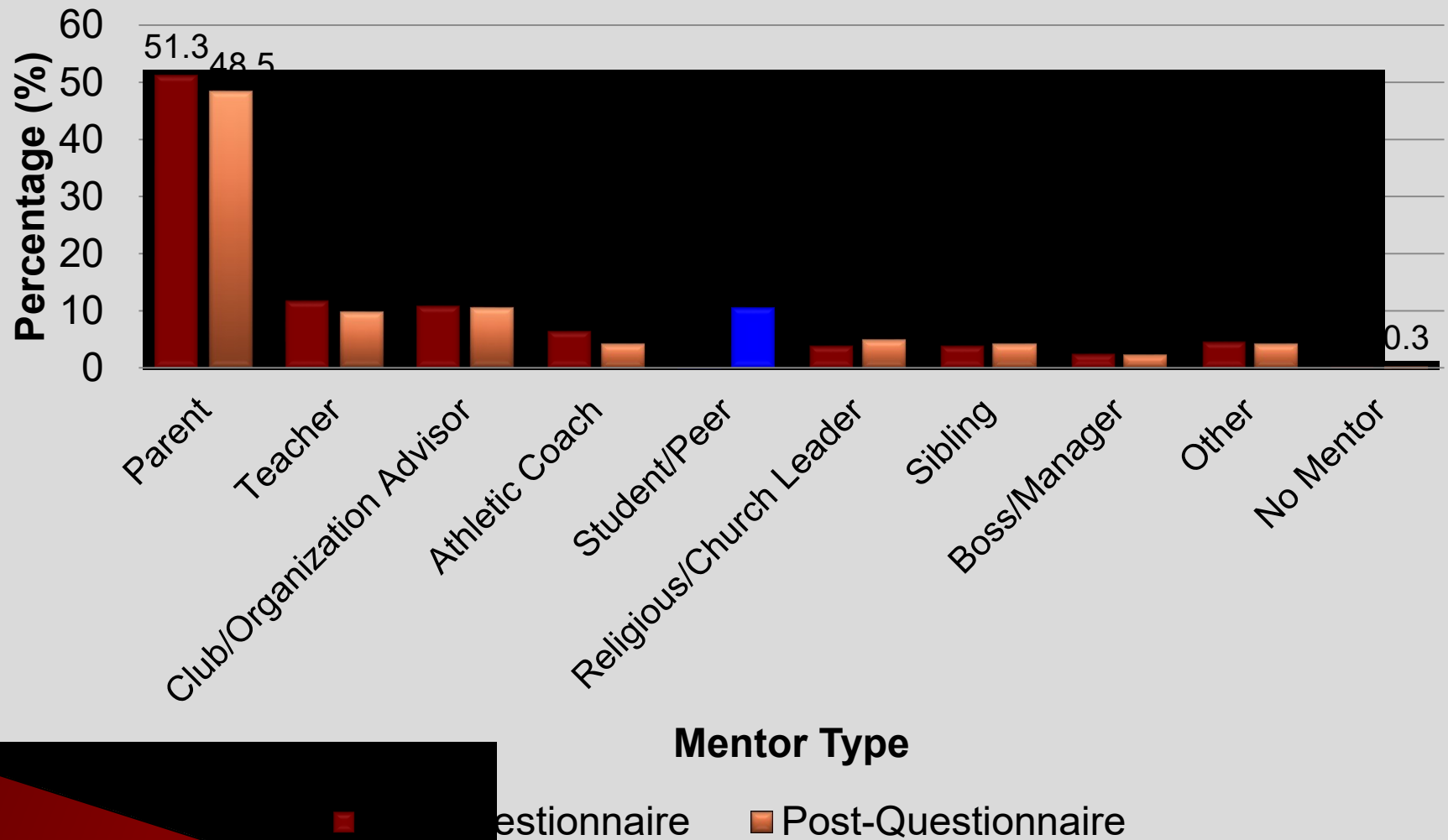
Conclusions & Implications

Objective 1: Personal Characteristics

- ▶ The typical respondent was an 18-year-old, Caucasian (non-Hispanic) female.
 - Focus additional efforts on ethnic and gender-related diversity in Land Grant universities.
- ▶ Mentorship provides value in engaging students on campus.
 - When students feel connected to the mission of the college, they recognize the *need* for their education, which could boost enrollment numbers and maintains retention.

Findings

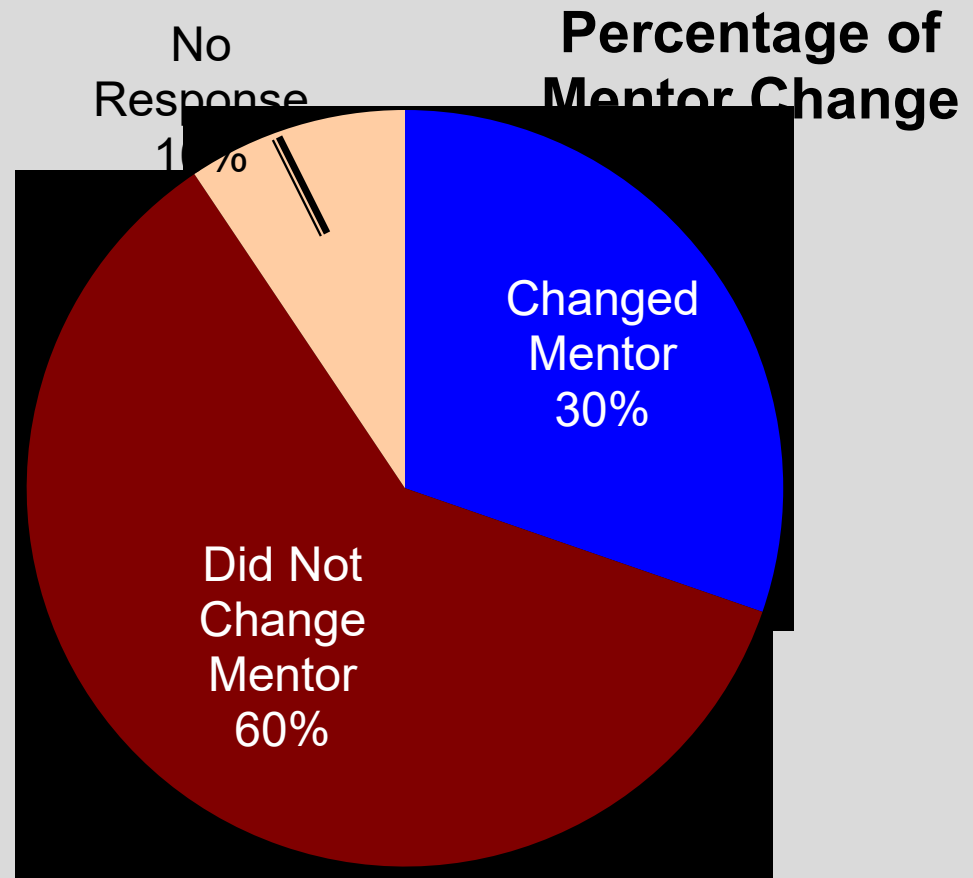
Objective 2: Classification of Influential Mentors



Findings

Objective 2: Classification of Influential Mentors

- ▶ Changed Mentor –
 $f = 132, 30\%$
- ▶ Did Not Change Mentor –
 $f = 263, 60\%$
- ▶ No Response –
 $f = 41, 10\%$



Conclusions & Implications

Objective 2: Classification of Influential Mentors

- ▶ Elmore and Maxwell (2008) highlighted students enter higher educational institutions with closer parent-to-student relationships than generations before.
- ▶ Roughly one-third of students (30%) changed their mentor classification between the pre- and post-questionnaires. The greatest increase (+6.2%) were student or peer mentors.
 - What are the main reasons students adjust in the first-eight weeks?
- ▶ Students who seek active mentorship establish connections build interpersonal and communication skills (Ensher & Murphy, 2005).

Recommendations

1. Incorporate purposeful peer mentor programs within first-semester collegiate retention efforts.
1. Once peer mentor programs are in place, evaluate if a relationship exists between organized mentorship efforts and freshmen retention data.
1. Target parental audiences for marketing student success and peer support efforts for recruitment endeavors.



Photo: OSU Agricultural Communications Services, 2014

Discussion

- ▶ Incorporating intentional mentorship programs early in students' college experience could be a reinforcing link for retaining Millennial college students.
- ▶ Mentorship focuses on building leadership in life rather than just leaders in the classroom.
 - How do students respond to different mentors
 - Relationship in a long-term study?
 - GenX?
- ▶ The time to invest in tomorrow's leaders has never been more prevalent (Levine & 2).



Photo: OSU Agricultural Communications Services, 2014