



The Pentorship Project

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Team Members: Sean Kilgore & Kanler Cumbass
University of Georgia, Institute of Higher Education

StudentAffairs.com
Case Study Competition



Presenters



Andrea Kiely (she/her/hers)
Director of First-Year Initiatives

Ms. Kiely is the current Director of First-Year Initiatives, housed within the Office of Belonging, Connecting, and Thriving at Carter University. In her role, she focuses on student's smooth transition to Carter, as well as ensuring every student finds belonging on campus. She is a graduate of the University of Georgia.



Sean Kilgore (he/him/his)
Coordinator for Transfer Student Initiatives

Mr. Kilgore is the current Coordinator for Transfer Student Initiatives at Carter University. In this role, he works with transfer students to ensure a smooth transition to Carter from their previous institution. He is a graduate of the University of Georgia.



Kanler Cumbass (he/him/his)
Coordinator for Alumni Connections

Mr. Cumbass is the current Coordinator for Alumni Connections at Carter University. In this role, he works directly with students and alumni to help them form sincere mentoring relationships. He leads CU's Mentorship Program. Mr. Cumbass is a graduate of the University of Georgia.

Institutional Characteristics

Carter University is a large, public research institution in a mid-sized suburban community.

The mission of Carter University is to teach, serve, and inquire.

Setting: Mid-size suburban community

Demographics

- 28,000+ enrolled students
- 82% undergraduate, 18% graduate or professional students
- 65% White (Non-Hispanic); 12.8% Black or African American; 11.8% Asian; 7.7% Hispanic or Latino; 3.7% Two or More Races
- Average In-State Tuition: \$14,000 per academic year
- Average Out-of-State Tuition: \$29,000 per academic year



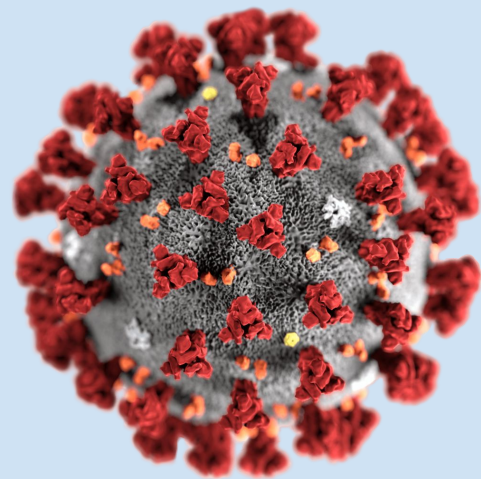
Covid-19

The onslaught of COVID-19 in Spring 2020 caused college campuses and leadership to rethink the way they approach education, student life, and the elements that correspond—forcing most campuses to move solely online.

As most campuses returned to a hybrid model in Fall 2020, in-person interactions were limited in order to comply with social distancing and prevent further spread of the virus.

Due to limitation of in-person interactions, colleges again had to rely upon online interactions and engagement as forms of learning and student life in order to keep their student body safe (Burke, 2020; Bailey, 2020).

COVID-19 also incurred strains on college budgets as the US economy suffered, annual giving dropped, and state appropriations fell—causing them to get creative with the budgets that they have (Friga, 2020).



Mental Health Matters

In a 2003 study published in the NASPA Journal about the climate of mental health on college campuses, Kitzrow noted an increase in the need of psychiatric services for undergraduate student populations (Kitzrow, 2003).

Furthering this research, a group of researchers from Cornell University in 2016 noted that students tend to have high peak periods throughout the semester, particularly around periods of examinations and school breaks (Tseng et al., 2016).

Of particularly noteworthiness are the effects of COVID-19 on student health, particularly as students had to suddenly uproot their life from college campuses and return home in Spring 2020 (Conrad et al., 2021).

Student Mental Health still suffered as students returned in the Fall semester due to strict guidelines around social-distancing, heavy utilization of online-classes, and cancellation of many of in-person student activities (Copeland et al., 2020).



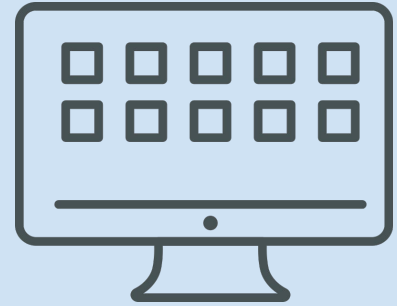
Online learning

Online learning, or e-learning, is the delivery of educational content through electronic means via internet platforms (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020).

This can be conducted synchronously (where the professor and students are interacting and engaging at once) or asynchronously (where the professor posts the content and the student completes on their own time).

While online learning has been a growing segment pre-COVID-19, with the US Department of Education noting that “one-third of all U.S. college students had some type of online course experience before the pandemic” (Gallagher & Palmer, 2020), the arrival of COVID-19 forced universities to rapidly shift to online course delivery (Burke, 2020).

As courses and student engagement began to be delivered online, students were forced to forego their preconceived notion of what the college experience is, further detrimenting their overall student experience and putting strains on many students who do not have the proper technology to utilize online learning (rural students and Pell-eligible students in particular) (Brownlee, 2020; Burke, 2020).



Student Engagement: Why it Matters

Student engagement is an important and crucial part of student success at Carter! Engagement is essential for learning, specifically engagement within the classroom, on campus, and with peers (Finn & Zimmer, 2012).

Engagement is multi-faceted and is known to:

1. ***promote persistence*** at the institution
2. ***increase participation*** in and out of the classroom
3. provide a ***stronger connection to campus***
4. encourage ***sense of belonging and community***.

[(Anderson, 1974), (Tinto, 2017)]

Engaged Students Are
Successful Students!

At Carter, we strive to support our students in order for them to secure a sense of belonging as well as utilize self-authorship.

To best assist our students at Carter University and provide them with the resources to be engaged, we must develop research-based programs that serve our most vulnerable students in these uncertain times.

Student Engagement: In an Online World

The Pmentorship Project gives access to mentorship and peer engagement, while keeping students safe during a global pandemic!

Studies indicate that **successful online student engagement** is influenced by a number of psychosocial factors. These include *peer community*, *engaging instructors*, as well as *confidence*, and by structural factors such as lifeload and course set-up [(Farrell & Burton, 2020), (Owolabi, 2018)].

The Pmentorship Project mirrors research findings and published literature by empowering students to participate in a peer community, as well as providing them with an engaging mentor to build confidence and focus on their wellbeing.

The Pentorship Project

The Pentorship Project is a new, formal e-mentorship program at Carter University. The Pentorship Project strives to connect students with alumni of Carter University for sincere mentoring relationships. During COVID-19, staying connected to our CU community is more important than ever. Alumni volunteers have decided to serve as ‘pentors’—a cross between a pen pal and mentor—who can provide community, guidance, and advice to CU students! All first-year students and transfer students are encouraged to have a pentor during their first semester at CU.

To join the **The Pentorship Project**:

1. Register as a pentee at <https://pentorshipproject.cu.edu>
2. Search for a mentor with similar interests
3. Engage in a semester-long pentorship
4. Communicate frequently with your pentor



Mission & Vision

Mission: The Pentorship Project seeks to engage Carter University students in sincere pentorships with alumni. First-year and transfer students are encouraged to engage in pentorships as soon as they arrive on campus to ensure finding a sense of campus belonging. The Pentorship Project strives to increase campus and community engagement for both CU students and alumni.

Vision: For every first-year and transfer CU Knight to have a pentor as they arrive on campus.



Mentorship Literature

Mentorship is critical for personal and professional success. Mentors are able to “counsel, coach, and advise” their protégés through challenges and towards solutions (Safer, 2017, p. 1).

The Mentorship Project is a *formal* mentoring program thus providing structure, oversight, and specific organizational goals for students (Safer, 2017).

Mentorship psychosocial support and professional development opportunities for those engaged (Menges, 2015). Mentorships should be reciprocal and collaborative with concise goals propelling the relationship forward.

In order for mentorships to reach their full potential, scholars recommend mentors and their protégés set S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time sensitive) goals (Safer, 2017).



Open
Communication
and
Accessibility

Identifying
Goals and
Challenges

Passion and
Inspiration

Caring
Personal
Relationship

Components of Effective Mentorship

Role
Modeling

Independence
and
Collaboration

Exchange
of
Knowledge

Mutual
Respect
and Trust

What is E-mentoring?

E-mentoring is “a computer mediated, mutually beneficial relationship between a mentor and a protégé which provides learning, advising, encouraging, promoting, and modeling, that is often boundaryless, egalitarian, and qualitatively different than face-to face mentoring” (Chong, Ching, Renganathan, Lim, Toh, Mason, & Krishna, 2019, p. 2).

E-mentoring is also known as telementoring, cyber-mentoring, virtual mentoring, and online mentoring (Rowland, 2017).

E-mentoring:

1. Uses asynchronous and synchronous forms of communication
2. Promotes equitable practices through mentorship
3. Helps facilitate knowledge transfer among participants



Four Stages of Mentorship

Preparation

This stage encourages discovery and building familiarity among participants. The pair works together to set the tone for the mentorship.



Negotiation

This stage is the “business stage” of the mentorship. Participants begin to discuss goals, expectations, and plans for the future. Having clear plans for the future will help provide structure.



Enabling Growth

This stage provides the nurturing, learning, and development typical of mentoring relationships. Critical questions and mutual support are key to this stage.



Coming to Closure

This stage recognizes all the pair accomplished through their mentoring relationships. Further, the pair should evaluate the mentorship and acknowledge success and areas of improvement moving forward.

Benefits of Mentorship Programs in Higher Education

Scholars have documented several **benefits** for mentoring programs situated in higher education:

1. **Improves job placement rates**— Student-to-alumni mentorships allow mentees to gain practical insight on career/industry trends
2. **Increases student retention rates**—Mentorship can be used as an onboarding strategy to engage incoming student populations, thus adding an additional layer of support
3. **Engages alumni**—Mentoring programs provide a meaningful way for alumni to engage with the institution beyond financial gifts. This is especially important for young alumni
4. **Provides enriching college experience**—Mentorship enables students to build lasting connections with alumni, while gaining a sense of belonging

(Brian, 2014)



Program Outline: Preparing for Success

STAGE ONE: PREPARATION

Preparing to engage in a mentorship requires self reflection for both the mentor and protégé. Participants will ask themselves and discuss together:

1. Who am I?
2. What skills do I bring to the mentorship?
3. What is my background?
4. What identities do I possess?
5. How can I positively contribute to a success mentorship?
6. How do I define myself? How do I want to define myself after this experience?

STAGE TWO: NEGOTIATION

Setting goals and expectations early on leads to a strong mentorship. Participants will consider:

1. What are our individual goals?
2. What are our shared goals?
3. How can this relationship be mutually beneficial?
4. How often do we want to meet?
5. How will we balance verbal and written communication?
6. How can we balance being pen pals and engaging in mentorship?
7. What are topics we want to discuss together?

Program Outline: Engagement & Closure

STAGE THREE: GROWTH

To grow in their mentoring relationship, pentors and protégés should write and meet with each other consistently. Mentees should come prepared to ask questions, take time to listen, be present and be willing to invest their time and energy. The pair might consider:

1. What is the most rewarding aspect of your career?
2. What experiences have been most impactful?
3. What challenges are you currently facing?
4. How do you navigate challenges?
5. What advice might you give your younger self?
6. What are you most passionate about?

STAGE FOUR: CLOSURE

To celebrate the successful end of pentorships, the Office of Belonging, Connecting, and Thriving is hosting “The Newly Paired Game.” We want to see how well our pentors and protégés know one another. Questions to consider:

1. What haven't we discussed?
2. Do we want to continue this pentorship beyond this program?
3. What was our greatest success?
4. What goals do we have moving forward?
5. What did we teach one another?
6. What was most surprising about this experience?
7. What would you tell a new pentor/protégé joining the program?

The Newly-Paired Game

We have redesigned the hit TV game show “The Newlywed Game” to showcase all we have learned from The Pentorship Project. Using the framework of the original game show, The Newly Paired pentorships will be put to the test!

This program is welcome to all Pentorship Project participants. At random, attending pairs will be asked to participate as contestants. Pairs will be asked “get-to-know-you” questions in order to test their knowledge of one another. Here are some examples:

What is your pentor/protégés’ biggest goal?

What is their favorite place to eat around Carter?

Where did your pentor/protégé grow up?

What is the pairs favorite memory together?

Winners will be crowned **Pentorship Pair of the Year!**



OFFICE OF BELONGING, CONNECTING, AND THRIVING

The Newly Paired Game

COME ON DOWN (VIRTUALLY, OF COURSE). YOU ARE THE NEXT CONTESTANT ON THE NEWLY PAIRED GAME. AT RANDOM, WE WILL SELECT PENTORSHIP PAIRS TO COMPETE AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.

WHAT PAIR KNOWS ONE ANOTHER THE BEST?

DECEMBER 1ST, 2021 | 6PM

[HTTPS://WWW.ZOOM.US/123456](https://www.zoom.us/j/123456)

#CARTERCONNECTION

JOIN HERE



Desired Outcomes

Through the Pentorship Project, we aim for the Carter student body to have:

Continued and
fulfilling
pmentorship

Sustained, open
dialogue

Campus connection

True and full student
engagement

A Sense of belonging

Alumni engagement

Persistence and
Retention

Personal and
Professional
Development



Marketing

In order to engage and draw in students, you have to meet them where they are at.

- With a highly-engaged student population on social media, it's important to reach them with the **#CarterConnection**.
 - As our students are not visiting campus as frequently due to online-learning and the safety precautions of staying at home, digital engagement is key.

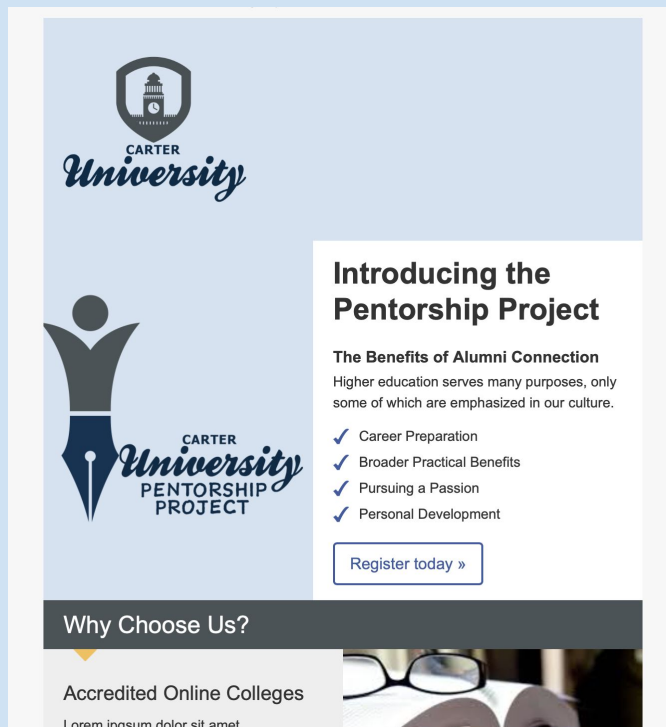
We will target students from the main university social media accounts (@CarterUniversity) on Twitter and Instagram with stylized ads that promote the program and encourage interaction. Depending on our final program budget, we intend to promote these posts as paid advertising in our geographical city region in order to reach our students who may not follow the university.

- In addition, we have received permission from the Director of First Year Initiatives, University Marketing, and our Alumni Affairs office to send a targeted blast email to our First-Year Students and actively engaged Alumni (alumni who have recently donated or attended a university event) to actively recruit them

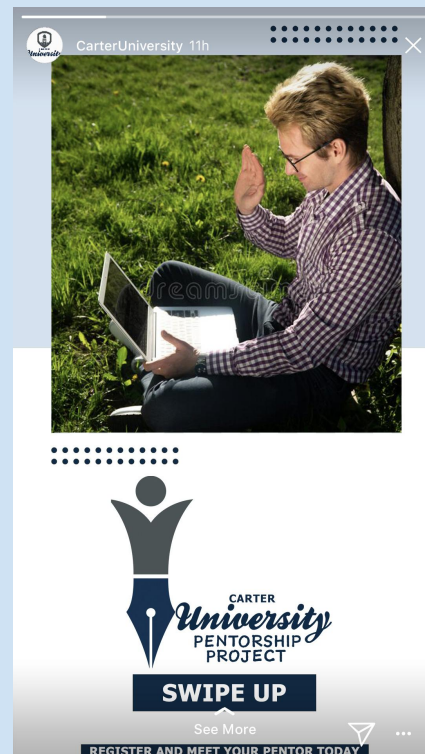
Marketing Execution Examples



Instagram Feed Post



Student Email



Instagram Story Post

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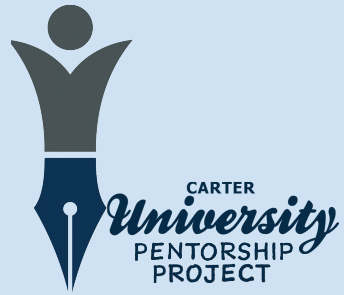
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Thank You!

