

Yvonne Wayne

'It's been one of the most positive things I've done in my life.' What are the benefits of participation in GCU mentoring schemes for the mentors?

Educational Research and Evaluation Seminar

1st November 2017



University for the Common Good

Overview

- Methodology
- GCU Outreach
- Motivation
- Sense of Belonging
- Impact on Studies
- Confidence
- Negatives
- Questions



Methodology

- Qualitative Study
- Focus Groups
- Thematic Analysis
- Current GCU Student Mentors
- 23 Participants



GCU Outreach

GCU Student Mentors work across a number of outreach initiatives including:

- Caledonian Club
- School Connect
- College Connect
- Routes for All

Many also employed to support subject-based mentoring and support schemes.

Motivation to Become a Student Mentor

- Participated as Pupil/Student
- Interest in Position
- Experience/CV Building



Participated as Pupil/Student (8)

When I came here for an Open Day I saw some Student Mentors and they helped me out, so I thought it was quite good to do that as well. (001)

I went to one of the schools that we work with, so I seen first hand what the Student Mentors do in terms of helping pupils. So I thought I would give back to what I learnt. (002)

...they came to our college and I was finding it difficult coming to uni, the fact I was going into 3rd year... So it was nice to get their opinions and they made us feel really welcome and they made us realise that there is actually people here because we were under the impression that it was uni and nobody helps you, like it's totally different from college, but they were so helpful for us and it's actually not been as bad. (003)

Interest in Position (7)

For me I thought I'm just interested in becoming social with people, so I thought this would be a great opportunity because it's also based in a university, so I thought it's accessible, it's easy and it's something I'd really enjoy doing anyway and since I have the opportunity why not take it? (004)

I think I applied because I wanted to obviously meet new people. This is my first year at university, so I came in from college, so I wanted to meet new people, new experiences. Just broaden myself because I feel like I was quite reserved and then I came to do mentoring and obviously work with high schools and primary schools. So I felt like it helped me. (005)

Experience/CV Building (6)

I was considering if I wanted to work with kids in the future or not and this is going to help me decide if I do or don't. (006)

It was something I was just quite interested in, having done mentoring before and maybe being able to work with a variety of groups and the experience is so valuable for your CV as well. So it really kind of ticks all the boxes for something extra curricular. (007)

I thought it's a good experience for me to go into schools and work, so that's why I applied. (008)

Sense of Belonging

The *What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme* argues that 'at the heart of successful retention and success is a strong sense of belonging...' (HEA 2012: 6)



Increased Contact with Staff and Students

- Thomas (2012) argues that student belonging is supported by a number of factors.
- A key factor being '[m]eaningful interaction between staff and students' (HEA 2012: 7)
- Contact with both staff and fellow students most-oft cited reason for contributing to an increased sense of belonging (11 Mentors)

Increased Contact with Staff and Students

I think because we work with the staff and they're so approachable, I didn't really see it as like when you're in school you see teachers and staff as very separate and it felt like I was part of it... (009)

...you know more of the staff and I feel like that's beneficial in any sense (010)

Increased Contact with Staff and Students

- Beltman and Schaeben (2012) conducted a study which also examined the benefits for mentors who had participated in a university mentoring schemes.
- They categorised the responses from 858 mentors into four main categories, one of which was social.
- Opportunity to meet and work with fellow students was keenly discussed by the participants.
- Helped cement their sense of belonging to GCU.

Increased Contact with Staff and Students

In first year I got to know all the Mentors...it helped me get to know people and settle into the uni (011)

I definitely feel like it's helped me with the transition from college to uni as well because I felt that was quite massive ...it's helped, even when you're just walking around you're like 'Hiya' and that's another person I know from a different course that's not on my course... So you do feel part of a wee team sort of thing. (012)

Pride in Institution

- GCU's motto is 'For the Common Good'.
- Many of the initiatives the Student Mentors work for are widening participation and community engagement projects.
- Ten Mentors expressed that they were proud to be a student and work for a university that undertakes this type of work.
- Cemented their sense of belonging.
- Institutional pride expressed throughout focus groups.

Pride in Institution

You're kind of proud because you see your university doing so much work in the community...but that gives me that sense of pride to come here. (001)

...there's loads of mentors that I've worked with who have come through primary school projects and School Connect and stuff like that, through college, working with GCU the whole way and then have went to GCU... So it's kind of cool to be a part of it...(013)

...we think GCU is the best university, we're all probably a bit biased there, but I personally do. When I put my uniform on or my hoodie and I'm walking up to University, it's not like I act any different, but I try and walk a bit straight, do you know what I mean? I just be a bit more conscious of promoting the University because I'm in that t-shirt or that hoodie. (014)

Impact on Studies

- Communication/Presentation Skills
- Time Management/Organisational Skills
- Team Work Skills
- Passion for Subject/Learning



Communication/Presentation Skills (8)

It's kind of made me just more confident and just think that...I don't know, it's just a presentation. Because before I was like oh no it's a presentation everybody's going to be watching. But now it's just get up and do it. (015)

...in terms of presentation skills. I was quite nervous to go up and present in front of a class, but I think now it's second nature because I'm that used to doing it in front of a different group of kids. (002)

It also has given me the confidence of speaking to strangers. Obviously sometimes in group work you get people you've never seen in your life. So you have to work for a whole semester with them, so it makes it easier to be able to talk to them and say 'Right, this is what we're going to do. We're going to work together, this is going to be fine.' Whereas student mentoring has made me have those skills and that's quite cool. (001)

Time Management/Organisational Skills (6)

So that you plan ahead if you've ever got any shifts or even not, it's more a case of knowing that you can't just leave this to the last minute because you have a little bit more extra responsibility in scheduling your life...

Yes, so I've found it beneficial in that sense, definitely because I was so rubbish in 1st year, like I would just do everything the day before, but I feel this year I've been way better. (010)

So it is good in that sense, it does make you use the time you've got better than you otherwise would have. (016)

Team Work Skills (5)

...when I had to do team projects and similar things, then yes it did kind of help because I was used to talking with people, working in a group, coming up with ideas. (017)

I was doing the new Mentor training 3 or 4 weeks ago and this is what I told the new Mentors, I was like 'This job really has made me a leader' because you're so used to working with a group of kids and facilitating that I find that when I'm in a group with my classmates I tend to facilitate. (008)

Passion for Subject/Learning (3)

I feel like going out and trying to encourage someone to do your course definitely reiterates why you chose it and why you should be passionate about it and why you want to do well. So I can, say I was trying to sell my course to someone, I feel that encourages me to go and study, like this is why I chose it. (010)

...it just helped to boost...why you're studying it and what makes you passionate about it and then also personally I see that mentoring also helps me within my chosen subject to just relate to people, talk to people, trying to improve my communication. (018)

Confidence (All)

...it just challenges you to be confident in so many different aspects of your personality and your life. (009)

...in my class I don't feel like the smartest person at all. I feel like I'm kind of out of my depth and I feel like everyone's smarter than me, but for one of the modules our participation in that class is graded... I feel like most of the times I don't even know what I'm saying, but I take lead of that group and I don't know how that happens. I'm like 'So what do you think?' but that comes purely from mentoring. It's given me confidence. (008)

Yeah it builds yourself, as a person, up I think and I think it's important... And you're forced to just jump in at the deep end and you just kind of go with it and if that's not something that will build you confidence then I don't know what would. (004)

Any Negatives?

- Can be cold outside conducting tours
- Irregular hours
- Can be stressful
- Can be very tiring

‘It’s been one of the most positive things I’ve done in my life.’

Thank you and any questions?

Yvonne Wayne

Health and Life Sciences

Yvonne.Wayne@gcu.ac.uk

Ext: 8520

