

Men's Group Project Summary Report

Mentoring Men Toward Healthier Masculinity: A Campus Wellbeing Initiative

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Project Overview

In response to the 2022-2023 Cozen assessment of the California State University system's Title IX and Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation programs, I co-developed and piloted a mentoring-based men's group program aimed at promoting campus wellbeing through developmental relationships. The program was designed to empower male students to recognize and interrupt harmful masculinity norms and sexist microaggressions among their peers.

Program Structure and Implementation

The pilot program was facilitated by Ulyses Dorantes, the campus sexual violence advocate, who served as a mentor to participants in a structured group setting. Originally designed as an 8-week intervention, resource and scheduling constraints necessitated condensing the program to a 3-day intensive format. The program's theoretical foundation drew upon research establishing adherence to traditional masculine norms as a risk factor for perpetrating sexual violence (Murnen et al., 2002) and evidence that men's willingness to intervene is strongly influenced by peer perceptions (Fabiano et al., 2003). The curriculum focused on:

- Exploring healthy expressions of masculinity
- Developing awareness of sexist behaviors and microaggressions
- Building skills for peer interruption of sexist microaggressions
- Creating supportive developmental networks among participants

Recruitment and Participation

Recruitment proved to be one of the most significant challenges. Despite multiple outreach strategies, we enrolled only 9 participants for the pilot program. This low enrollment highlighted important barriers to male engagement in gender-focused programming and provided valuable insights for future recruitment approaches.

Key Findings and Observations

Despite the small sample size and abbreviated format, several important observations emerged from the pilot:

1. **Unmet Need for Safe Spaces:** Participants demonstrated a strong desire for spaces to discuss masculine ideologies and identity issues, suggesting an unaddressed well-being need on campus.

2. **Engagement in Developmental Relationships:** The mentoring relationship between the facilitator and participants fostered meaningful conversations about masculinity and personal growth.
3. **Recruitment Barriers:** The challenges in recruiting male participants revealed institutional and cultural barriers that must be addressed for successful program implementation.
4. **Program Adaptability:** The condensed format, while not ideal, still provided value to participants and demonstrated the program's potential flexibility.

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

The pilot experience yielded several important lessons for future iterations:

- **Recruitment Strategy:** Future programs will require more intensive and strategic recruitment approaches, possibly including peer recruitment and incentive structures.
- **Program Duration:** While the 3-day format was feasible, a longer program duration would likely enhance developmental outcomes.
- **Institutional Support:** Strong institutional backing and marketing will be essential for program success.
- **Evaluation Methods:** The abbreviated timeline limited the ability to measure attitude changes, highlighting the need for more extensive pre- and post-program assessment.

Implications for Campus Wellbeing

This pilot demonstrated the potential for mentoring-based interventions to address masculine norms that contribute to campus climate issues. The program's approach aligns with Casey and Smith's (2010) findings that men's engagement in anti-violence work stems from connection, awareness, and support provided through developmental relationships. The program's focus on creating developmental networks among male students represents a promising approach to promoting both individual and community wellbeing through transformed attitudes toward gender and relationships.

Scholarly Contribution

Based on the insights gained from this pilot, I wrote up a comprehensive case study and submitted it to the University of New Mexico's *Journal of The Chronicle of Mentoring & Coaching* for the 18th Annual Mentoring Conference. The case study focuses on the program development process, implementation challenges, and preliminary observations, contributing to the scholarship on developmental relationships and wellbeing in higher education settings.

Conclusion

While the pilot program faced significant challenges, particularly in recruitment and duration constraints, it provided valuable proof-of-concept evidence for mentoring-based interventions targeting masculine norms on college campuses. The strong engagement of participants and their expressed need for such programming suggests that with refined recruitment strategies and

institutional support, similar programs could contribute meaningfully to campus wellbeing initiatives.

The experience underscores the importance of developmental relationships in promoting positive masculinity and the potential for mentoring approaches to create sustainable cultural change within higher education institutions. Future iterations of the program will build upon these lessons learned to create more robust and impactful interventions.

References

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