Counseling Center Peer Ambassador Program Referral and Scheduling Process

Intended for use by Counseling Center staff only

- What is and is NOT the role of the Peer Ambassador?

The Peer Ambassador is a resource for students whose goal is to help students better connect with campus, establish relationships and build community in BG. The ambassador is an undergraduate psychology intern who meets with students within the Counseling Center in a one-to-one capacity only after receiving a referral from another Counseling Center staff member. The ambassador’s contact with students would include: an initial e-mail message (or phone call), an in-person meeting, a follow up-e-mail or phone call, and, in some instances, a follow-up meeting. The Peer Ambassador will make all contacts and hold all meetings with students in the Counseling Center. Meeting with a student more than two times would be rare and would only occur following the Peer Ambassador’s consultation with his/her supervisor. In meeting with students, the Peer Ambassador will discuss students’ interests and help them find meaningful outlets for those interests in the form of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The ambassador’s role is not that of a friend or mental health counselor.

These distinctions are ensured through:

- the creation and utilization of this document, which provides a script for referring counselors to follow when they recommend that a student see the Peer Ambassador, so as to maintain students are properly informed about the Peer Ambassador’s role.

- the use of a relevant consent form that reiterates details about the service, describes the parameters of confidentiality and overall establishes a tone of professionalism that implicitly as well as explicitly establishes appropriate boundaries.

- conducting meetings within the Counseling Center (that are scheduled through the Counseling Center).

- When referral to the Peer Ambassador appropriate?

If students indicate that they lack meaningful outlets for their creative (personal), social, or career aspirations, are disconnected from campus, perceive little sense of belonging or community, feel lonely or alienated.

- When is a referral NOT appropriate? / Exclusionary Criteria

If students have marked problems with impulse control, gross disturbances in their thought processes, or certain Axis II conditions (e.g. personality disorders that would suggest they might strive to form an inappropriate relationship with the Peer Ambassador). Students who are lacking social skills need not necessarily be excluded. They might be able to benefit from meeting with the Peer Ambassador, who could direct students to resources that would help improve their social skills or recommend groups in which members are accepting of students lacking social skills.
• What you might say to introduce the concept and explain the role of the Peer Ambassador:

“We have an undergraduate psychology intern with us at the Counseling Center whose job is to enhance students’ experience at Bowling Green State University. He is a kind, caring, insightful, passionate individual who is well connected with campus and specializes in helping students find belonging, create community and actively explore as well as pursue their interests.”

• What you might say to transition into scheduling a meeting:

“If you are interested and it’s not too much trouble, would you like to schedule a meeting now?” (Note: Graduate students will need to ask front desk staff to place meetings on David’s schedule.)

• Details – Explaining Confidentiality:

“Our Peer Ambassador will only be given limited information about you. He will be provided with the following: your name, phone number, e-mail address, the reason for the referral and any other information you want me to share with him regarding your interests or aspects of the college experience you wish to discuss. This information will be available to David on the “Peer Ambassador Referral Form” that we will complete together. David will complete brief documentation describing his subsequent interactions with you and will insure that I receive this information."  

NOTE: This document will then be scanned and become part of the student's official (confidential) record.

“David may share general information with me or his Counseling Center supervisor about how your meeting went. He is required to share information with me (or an available staff member in my absence) if you were to disclose matters that had him concerned about your immediate safety or wellbeing. Of course, David’s discussion with me would be a one-way disclosure, and I would not divulge any information of a personal, private nature in any conversation we might have. He will not have access to your counseling records and will not be informed of anything we have discussed in counseling.”

• How do you schedule?

Before scheduling an appointment, be sure to have the student review “The Peer Ambassador Services Informed Consent Form. The student and a witness should sign this consent form; retain one copy for the Center’s records and give the student a copy to take with him/her. Additionally, work together with your client to complete the “Peer Ambassador Referral Form” (which is to be signed and dated by you as well as your client). (Please be sure to forward this form to me.) You will schedule students directly into Titanium to meet with me at a specific time. Once a student has expressed interest in meeting with me, explain that “David will contact you directly to confirm the meeting time.” (Note: I will not personally have access to Titanium. My schedule will be printed off and shared with me by authorized Center staff).

Please schedule clients to meet with me for a one-hour block of time on Titanium. (I will attempt to limit these meetings to 45 minutes--with the extra 15 minutes affording me the opportunity to jot down notes following the appointment, to prepare for my next meeting, or to consult with staff if necessary.) Once you have scheduled a student to meet with me, I will personally reach out to the student via e-mail to confirm the time and express my genuine interest in meeting with them. Also, if a student informs you of a particular interest or need prior to my meeting with the student (and you have noted this on the referral form), I will be able to better prepare for the meeting by gathering specific resource materials; by considering different student leaders, organizations and professors to mention; and, most importantly, by reflecting on what might be appropriate (and inappropriate) to talk about during the meeting. When appropriate, a second meeting will be scheduled after at the time of or after the first meeting.
Objectives:

The above process strives to ensure that those students who would benefit from meeting with me are given the opportunity to do so; that students are clear about my role as a Peer Ambassador (i.e. they are furnished with written information about my role and asked to provide informed consent) and that students feel comfortable with the scheduling process. As a whole, the process is set up in a way that will hopefully allow for me to actively reach out to students, initiate a positive connection, and be as effective as possible during meetings.

Checklist for Referring Counselor:

If you decided to refer a student to meet with our Peer Ambassador, did you:

__complete the referral form with the student?
__sign and date the referral form (along with the student)?
__ask that the student review and sign the informed consent form?
__retain the signed consent form and provide the student with a copy of this consent form?
__schedule a time for the student to meet with David (and note this time /date on Titanium as well as on the referral form)?
__promptly place the referral and consent forms in the “To Be Scanned” folder?