



Retention Case Study

The Impact of Peer Mentorship on Student Retention



The Opportunity

Midland University is a private, liberal arts college in Nebraska with a significant commuter student population:

- Approximately 1,300 students enrolled
- A first-year retention rate of 62% in 2015-2016

The university saw an opportunity to improve retention by personalizing their students' first-year experience. In considering different options to increase retention, Midland wanted to make sure that their approach was aligned with their student-centered culture and mission.

Why Mentor Collective?

The partnership presented an opportunity to accelerate progress towards multiple strategic goals through an approach that was mission-aligned and sustainable.

Susan Kruml, Vice President of Academic Affairs, engaged Mentor Collective to work in collaboration with their Institutional Review Board to construct a control trial to effectively understand the impact of the Mentor Collective mentorship approach at Midland.



Expertise

- Mentor Collective has a track record of achieving institutional goals
- Mentor Collective partners with 50+ institutions to improve persistence and student experience



Mission

- Mentor Collective is a mission-driven company focused on improving student success
- Mentor Collective believes every student deserves a caring, relevant mentor



ROI

- Without Mentor Collective, developing and running a similar program would require several new hires, and significant upfront time and expenses



Mentor Collective helps to develop intentional and sustained mentor relationships that meet students where they are in their journey to success.



The Impact of Peer Mentorship on Student Retention at Midland University

The Partnership

Midland tied the Mentor Collective collaboration to their MID101 First Year Experience (FYE) course:

- 50% of the Midland FYE course sections were placed in the “treatment group” and were offered access to the Mentor Collective Mentorship Program
- Students were introduced to the program in their FYE course once the academic year had started
- Students in the “treatment group” were paired with trained upperclassmen and alumni mentors who supported the students’ transition into Midland University with a school-branded software platform
- The program was a collaboration between Academic Affairs and Enrollment and was housed under the Director of Student Success



Leveraged existing alumni and student leader network



Provided expertise, software, and services



Why Run a Control Trial?

- ✓ According to the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEERA), randomized control trials are the gold standard for assessing student outcomes of institutional interventions.
- ✓ While not fully randomized, Midland and Mentor Collective recognized that they could assess the efficacy of Mentor Collective’s intervention by creating a control trial and rigorously analyzing the data to control for any confounding variables.
- ✓ After the fall and spring semester, Mentor Collective and Midland worked with a data scientist to control for course selection and high school GPA, ultimately showing a clear picture of the pilot’s impact on retention.



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The Results*

The program was successful and demonstrated significant impacts on the treatment group:

- 159 students were matched with alumni and peer mentors, who collectively committed 245 volunteer hours/week to the program
- **9%** increase in likelihood of re-enrollment by simply offering the program
- **481%** increase in likelihood of re-enrollment for students who completed 3+ sessions
- The program **saved 15 students from attrition** in the treatment group, increasing Midland's 2016-17 overall retention rate from 68.3% to 72.8% **(+4.5%)**
- **52** academic, mental health, and transition risks were flagged, allowing Midland administrators and advisors to orchestrate preemptive interventions

* These statistically significant results have been rigorously analyzed, including controls for classroom environment, high school GPA, and assignment bias

Impact on 2017 Fall re-enrollment

+ 15 students



“I was excited to partner with Mentor Collective because of **their expertise and commitment to student outcomes**. We all know mentorship has the potential to help our students and their model actually works – **they were able to take something really personal and do it at scale**. We were impressed by the sophistication of their model and believe it will have a very bright future in higher education”

- Susan Kruml, VP of Academic Affairs



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Explaining the Impact

What made this intervention work? Numerous studies have shown that activities like peer mentorship *could* impact indicators of student success, but few have used statistical analysis to understand the true impact of a volunteer mentoring on student persistence and retention.

This collaboration increased first-year retention by 4.5% because it incorporated research-backed practices within a structured, technology-aided intervention. Specifically:

- Mentors and mentees were matched based on self-identified values, ensuring that relationships were built on both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.
- All mentors received ongoing training and support on the best practices of mentorship.
- Each mentorship session was associated with a concrete learning outcome or indicator of student success (e.g., help-seeking behavior).
- The intervention was tightly woven into the Midland University first-year experience, increasing compliance and engagement.

As a result, this trial served as strong evidence on the efficacy and ROI of a technology-enabled volunteer mentoring model.



“I volunteered to be a mentor because once upon a time I was freshman in college and knew what it was like trying to handle everything at once. I think it's great they are doing this for the students now because **I know when I was a freshman it would have been nice to have mentor guide me through my first year of college.**”

- Midland University Mentor



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About Mentor Collective: Sustainable, Large-Scale Peer Mentorship

INTENTIONAL & SUSTAINED RELATIONSHIPS THAT MEET STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE IN THEIR JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

Mentor Collective is a mission-driven company dedicated to student success. We build, manage and scale personalized peer mentoring programs, or complement existing programs, to positively impact the student experience.

We do this with the help of our:



Operations & Mentorships Team



Platform & Tools

Undergraduate - Graduate - Professional - Continuing - Online



Administrator

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Successful mentorship