CAREER IDENTITY AND MENTORING IN FIRST YEAR PHYSICS UNDERGRADUATES

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The purpose of this study is to design and evaluate the effectiveness of a mentoring program run for first year physics students. The mentoring program was initiated to address the low student retention in undergraduate physics courses. Preliminary surveys found a mismatch between student career identity and perceived relevance of physics.

Mentoring has been shown to have a positive effect on mentees' science identity, retention, and career planning by promoting science outcomes for the mentees and positive attitudes about science. This has been particularly effective for students belonging to underrepresented groups in science, who typically have lower science identity.

Students became acquainted with the 20-member mentoring panel in a flash mentoring event. Mentors were partnered with two students and asked to spend an average of fifteen minutes per week in discussion with the students. Discussion topics were emailed weekly.

Some of our learnings from this pilot program included doing a post questionnaire during class time to ensure a high completion rate. The main gains cited by mentees were increased motivation to study, new vision of future career and employment and an increase in the number of career relevant skills they would learn through their course.

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