

FTS Peer Teaching & Mentoring Fall 2018 Pilot

Executive Summary

Increasingly, first-year experience (FYE) programs are involving upper-level undergraduates because doing so has far reaching impacts on FYE students and programs. At Gustavus, we previously attempted to enhance first-year students' academic and personal development by including peers in our First-Term Seminar (FTS) Program. At the time, Gustie Greeters - orientation leaders - could opt-in to a program to assist an FTS Program faculty in delivering the FTS Advising Curriculum. FTS faculty also would opt-in to the program and be matched with a Greeter, who then became a mentor for the FTS section and deliver the FTS Advising Curriculum.

This program was discontinued when longitudinal data suggested no significant change in retention, GPA, campus involvement, familiarity of academic resources, and so on. However, the data focused entirely on outcomes associated with first-year students and their change over time with no consideration of outcomes related to FTS faculty or the Greeter Mentors. Literature suggests that upper-level students gain from this mentoring, leading, and teaching role; they also develop both academically and personally, gaining skills that support their remaining college career and their post-graduation activities.

In Fall 2018, the FTS Program redesigned and piloted a peer-to-peer learning program that focuses not only on benefits to first-year students but also assesses outcomes related to faculty and the upper-level students. In Fall 2018, two sections of FTS taught by the same professor participated in an initial pilot of a FTS Peer Mentor, Academic Leader, and Teacher (Peer MALT) program. One of the two sections served as an experimental group and included a Peer MALT who delivered the FTS Advising Curriculum to students 1 day per week to one section (no faculty present) and the professor delivered the same curriculum to the other section (the control group).

Fall 2018 Pilot

Changes From Greeter Mentor Program

In this pilot, several important changes were implemented relative to the previous Greeter Mentor Program:

- **Support for Peer MALT** –the MALT concurrently enrolled in a 0.5 credit NDL 391 course wherein the Peer MALT met with the FTS Director to training related to teaching, advising, and mentoring, to prepare lessons, to reflect on his experience as a Peer MALT and connect that experience to his future/career goals.
- **Additional Assessment Variables** - In addition to academic, co-curricular, and retention outcomes, the current pilot is also assessing first-year students' sense of belonging to their FTS and to the college, motivated strategies for learning, and student perceptions of teaching and learning. Additional qualitative (e.g., reflections) and quantitative (e.g., time spent advising in office hours) data are addressing impact on the Peer MALT and faculty.

Predictions

The Fall 2018 Pilot assessed several predictions:

- FTS students would have a greater sense of belonging to the FTS and to Gustavus when interacting with a Peer MALT.
- Student perceptions of FTS and the Peer MALT and their effectiveness would not differ.
- Incorporating a FTS Peer MALT would *reduce* the amount of time faculty would spend in meetings with FTS students, particularly during the registration period (from Fall Break through the end of registration).
- The Peer MALT would have a positive experience and develop skills related to remaining college career and post-graduation activities.

Preliminary Results

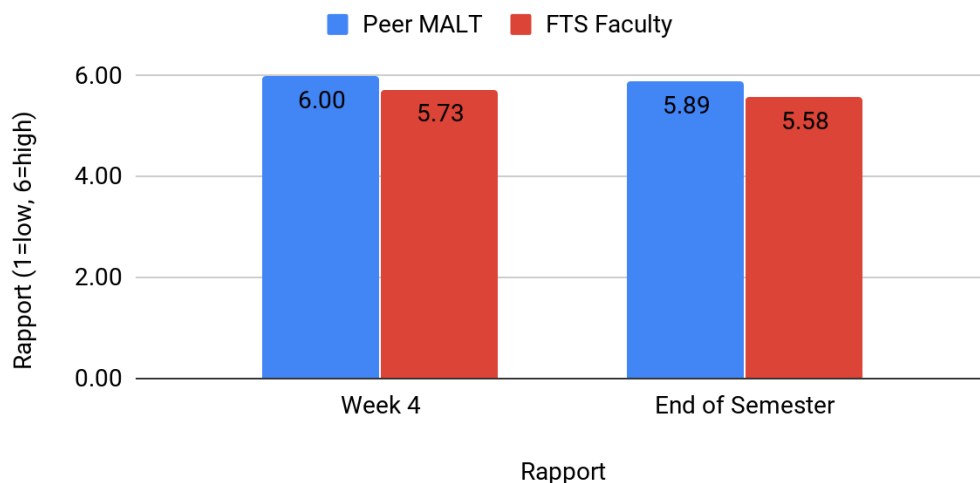
First-year Student Outcomes

- Having a Peer MALT deliver the content was as effective as having the content delivered by an FTS Faculty. Across all variables assessed, first-year student outcomes were equivalent in both sections. Sense of belonging, motivated strategies for learning, perceptions of teaching and learning, and awareness of campus resources were equivalent between sections with and without a Peer MALT.

Student Perceptions: Peer MALT vs. Faculty

- Students reported a better rapport with the Peer MALT across the semester than with the faculty member.

Student Perception of Rapport with Peer MALT and FTS Faculty

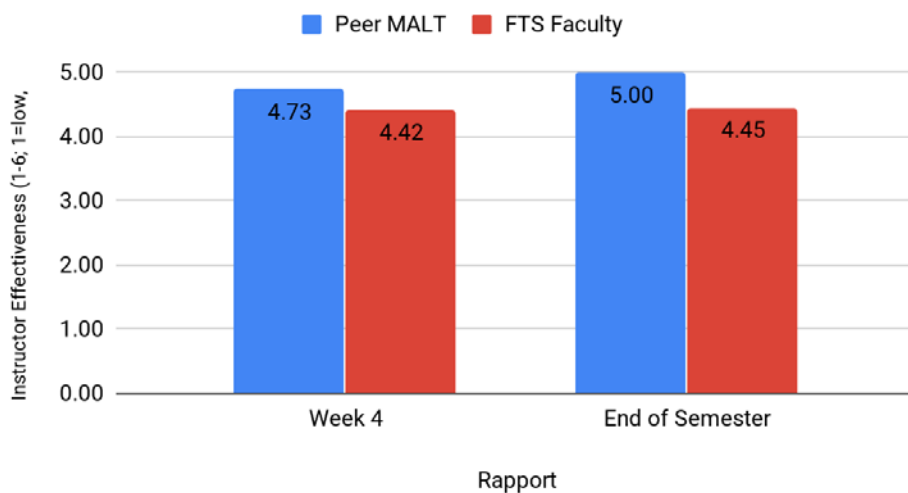


Instructor Effectiveness

- Students in the experimental group perceived more effective teaching from the Peer MALT than the FTS Faculty.
 - [Note that the FTS Faculty is considered in a broader context, since these questions were not asked exclusively about the advising-related sessions. Importantly, reports of

instructor effectiveness of the FTS Faculty did not differ between the two sections after 4 weeks and at the end of the semester.]

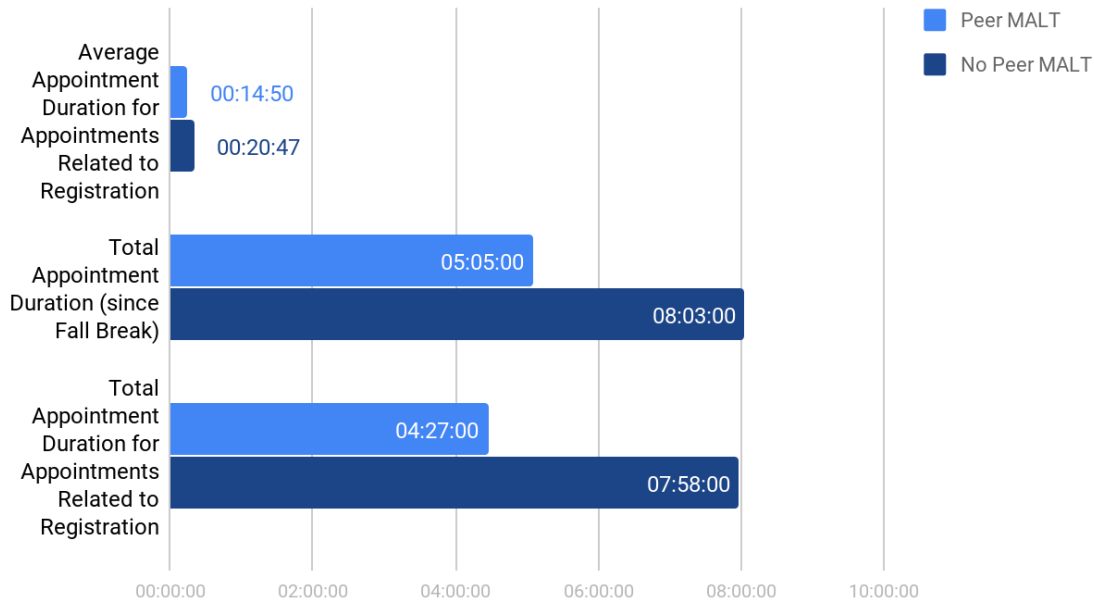
Student Perception of Instructor Effectiveness



Faculty Experience

- Students in the Peer MALT section required less time with faculty during registration. Average appointment duration was nearly 6 minutes shorter when meeting with students from the Peer MALT. Additionally, the total amount of time spent in office appointments since fall break was nearly 3 hours less with students from the Peer MALT section—and this increased slightly to a difference of 3.5 hours when factoring out appointments that did not include a discussion of course schedules (e.g., questions about assignments for the current FTS course).

Time Spent in Office Appointments with Students



Other Reflections

- The course professor noted that it would have been helpful to have more time to meet all of the required FTS student learning outcomes (the course met four times a week for 50 minutes with one of those sessions devoted to advising and the other three to the academic course content). Adding a fourth academic session in the week would allow for more time to work with the students and enhance the course. That would, however, require meeting five days a week total (reserving one day for the advising curriculum).
- The pilot seemed successful from the Peer MALT's perspective. Although qualitative data from the Peer MALT is still being analyzed, personal communication between the MALT and FTS Director indicates that the MALT experienced growth and refinement of skills (e.g., public speaking, creating lesson plans, relationship building, etc.) throughout this semester-long experience.

Next Steps: Fall 2019 Pilot

The FTS Program aims to implement the FTS Peer MALT Program more broadly in Fall 2019 in order to gain more accurate assessment data. The assessment will refine and include parts of the assessments employed in the Fall 2018 Pilot and will expand to include additional, relevant assessments. Currently, FTS is recruiting FTS Faculty to opt-in for this Fall 2019 Pilot under the following conditions:

- FTS meets 5 days a week; Peer MALTs instruct the FTS Advising Curriculum on Thursdays.
- FTS Faculty will not attend the Thursday sessions with Peer MALTs unless invited by the Peer MALT.

- Allow for at least 20% of your final course grade to be assigned by grades from the Peer Advising Sessions. Faculty must still include visits, activities, and/or discussion of campus resources related to academic skills, specifically the Library and the Writing Center.
- Participate in the assessment activities related to this pilot (completion of a survey and administering a survey to the FTS students).
- FTS Faculty will nominate at least one Peer MALT (ideally one they would like to work with) and encourage them to apply.

These pilots will be assessed in Fall 2019. Those assessment results will inform further expansion of the Peer MALT program.

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