MI CASA

Mentors Initiating Community Action, Support and Advocacy

Introduction
Higher education access for Hispanic students continues to be limited by lack of support and guidance needed to prepare for and succeed in obtaining a university degree.

Goal
A two-year mentoring program that educates and builds community, Project MI CASA seeks to recruit and retain Hispanic high school students in preparation for UNCW Admissions and help them achieve at the highest level of education.

Project Description
- Program Advisor familiar with local Hispanic community serves as link between UNCW, students, and community.
- Schools systems and community recommend students for participation. Students file applications. Priorities considered: First generation college-bound, academic rigor, teacher recommendations, leadership roles, interest in UNCW as university of choice.
- UNCW students participate as volunteer mentors. They complete contracts and mentor training.
- UNCW mentors and MI CASA students are assigned gender-specific mentors at a 1 to 1 ratio. All activities are coordinated by Program Advisor with the help of UNCW mentors.

Activities
- Culture of College: Admissions, financial aid, student life, leadership opportunities.
- School Success: Study skills, test preparation, time and finance management.
- Community Service: In collaboration with different institutions across UNCW campus and local community, events run once per semester.
- Family Connections: Inform and educate parent/guardians about college planning and decision making while creating a platform for students to go to college.
- Campus Life: Centro Hispano cultural celebrations and UNCW special presentations.

Participants
- 1 program Advisor
- 26 UNCW Students
- 26 Current High School Students
- Alumni Chapter (9 Graduated High School Students and 9 former UNCW mentors)
- 5 New Hanover County Schools: Ashley, New Hanover, Laney, Hoggard and IBEC.
- 3 Pender County Schools: Pender High, Heide Trask and Topsail High School.
New Initiatives

1) Parent meetings
   - Brief parents on what to expect after high school graduation and what requirements are necessary to attend college (correctly filled out tax returns, clear immigration status, timelines, decision making, cost of attendance and admission process.
   - Demonstrate why higher education and explain the value of a college degree so that parent can support their sons and daughters in the process.
   - Educate parents on topics like financial aid, student life, expectations from parents/guardians, careers and majors.

2) Faculty initiative
   - UNCW faculty serve as a resource for UNCW student mentors who studying in their departments or field of expertise. Faculty will also be invited to a “UNCW student mentor panel” where they will share their college and professional experiences with UNCW student mentors.
   - Participate on a “high school mentee panel” where faculty will have the opportunity to share their experiences with high school mentees who are interested in their field of study.

3) MI CASA Alumni Chapter
   - After 2 years of participation in the MI CASA project students become part of the MI CASA Alumni Chapter. Former mentors and mentees become role models and will help guide the current cohorts by sharing their experience and insight.

4) Extended recruitment
   - Current mentees take part in the actual recruitment process. Mentees will have an opportunity to talk to their peers and classmates about the benefits of the MI CASA project from a personal perspective.
   - Top mentors will also join the recruiting efforts and will be able to address potential mentees face to face in order to encourage rising juniors to apply to the MI CASA project.

5) Fundraising
   - Fundraising event to help raise money to subsidize food expenses.
Training is an intricate part of MI CASA and all mentors go through a series of meetings (group and 1 on 1) to ensure that they have the necessary skills, support and materials to serve as positive role models for their mentees.
INTRODUCTION

MI CASA (Mentors Initiating Community Action, Support, and Advocacy) mentoring project at the University of North Carolina Wilmington is an innovative program designed to provide access to higher education to Hispanic/Latino high school students in North Carolina.

The goal of this two year program is to identify high achieving Hispanic students from local high schools who wish to further their education in universities like UNCW. During this college preparatory process, high school mentees and UNCW mentors foster a stronger sense of community.

MI CASA’s mentoring project also involves UNCW faculty members, as well as graduate and undergraduate scholars. The program is designed to encourage the highest level of education for selected Hispanic high school sophomores who demonstrate promise, determination, discipline, and need. MI CASA serves as a comprehensive support program that provides mentoring, College Prep Seminars, tutoring, community service, and cultural enrichment activities in order to help high school mentees become compelling candidates for college admission and scholarship assistance.

MENTORING OBJECTIVES

Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction. A mentor is a special type of volunteer. Mentoring is the MOST important part of the program because your success as a role model will help MI CASA mentees achieve their goals. This preparatory process often starts with establishing a friendship and positive partnership with your mentee.

The following are a few objectives for this guide:

- Foster a confidence and the idea of success after graduation.
- Encourage higher education after high school graduation.
- Develop a stronger sense of community and determination.
- Provide a clear understanding of the mentoring process and relationship.
- Support your mentee through the 2 year preparatory process.
- Make the effort to keep up with your mentee. Be persistent in getting in touch, and take the initiative in getting together.
- Help your mentee identify positive aspects in his/her life (especially during difficult time).
- Develop a high level of trust with the mentee. Trust between the mentor and mentee is the foundation for a successful relationship. Remember, this takes time!
MENTORING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Participate in MI CASA activities at a minimum of once a month (Saturdays)
- Serve as a positive, supportive, involved mentor for two years with the goal of fostering high achievement and college acceptance for the mentee (mentors may go abroad for one semester).
- Commit to at least one substantial phone call and/or email exchange per week with the mentee. (Substantial: of real worth, value, or effect; of solid character or quality. As listed on www.dictionary.com)
- BE A POSITIVE ROLE MODEL. Everything you do and say is automatically acceptable for the mentee to do or say, so be constantly aware.
- Motivate and encourage students to participate in MI CASA activities
- Communicate with MI CASA’s Coordinator to keep him/her informed of any mentoring relationship changes or concerns.
- Complete bi-monthly “MI CASA Mentor evaluation.”
- Establish boundaries with your mentee (always remember personal safety).
MEETING YOUR mentee (guideline)

Initial Meeting:

• Introduce yourself ask questions to learn more about your mentee. Share information about yourself.

• Explain your role as mentor.

• Identify best times to make contact and preferred contact methods (phone, Email, etc.).

• Use the Needs Assessment completed by the protégé to outline meeting topics. Mutually set goals for the mentoring relationship.

• Encourage your mentee to contact you if they have any questions or concerns before you meet again (review calendar to remind them about the next MI CASA event/meeting).

Second Meeting:

• Check how things are going. Ask about stumbling blocks.

• Have there been surprises? What has been great; what has been challenging? Help them by giving them ideas of resource persons they can contact to get their questions answered.

• Discuss the topics outlined for this meeting (check purpose of activity) and ask about their individual goals and objectives (find solutions and offer your support!)

• Review some of the items in the MI CASA Mentoring Guide.

• Schedule a meeting outside of MI CASA. Encourage your mentee to contact you with questions or concerns. Review the topics to be covered at the next meeting.

Third Meeting:

• Share important up-coming events such as UNCW activities, community initiatives, personal activities, etc. Encourage participation as appropriate.

• Review and discuss items selected for discussion at this meeting. Offer your insight.

• Check to see how your mentee is doing. Answer their questions or refer them to an appropriate resource. Keep in mind their goals and objectives.

• Ask about balancing work and family. Is your mentee concerned with being able to strike an appropriate balance? Refer them to their supervisor if needed.

• Continue to set meeting topics so meetings will be productive. Continue contact by phone, E-mail or face to face.

Synopsis: This document is part of the starter kit that all mentors receive in the first training session. The idea is to provide easy steps to follow for the first three meetings in order to make sure the relationship starts up with appropriate goals and expectations as the primary foundation.
Synopsis: Evaluate mentor progress/training (CLES), monitor contact with mentee and reconfirm mentor commitment. This meeting is followed up by a 1 on 1 meeting to gather important information about mentee and set up game plan to make sure mentees/mentor goals are achieved.
Community Service

Once a year MI CASA gives back to the community with our staple community service event. Here are the past two events from the previous two years:

**Synopsis:** Participants engaged with Wilmington kids with the purpose of promoting exercise, outdoor activities and healthy nutrition. Our members were in charge of face painting, kids Zumba and several other essential stations during the 2012 “Healthy Kids Day.”

**Synopsis:** MI CASA’s tasks were setting up road blocks, guiding participants to their appropriate positions and directing traffic as needed. Some members participated in the parade while others helped to set up vendor tents and broke down road blocks after the event.
Achievement and Leadership Events

The following events are programmed on a yearly basis:

**Synopsis:** Our annual Pot Luck Lunch around winter break provides a foundation for mentors and mentees to strengthen their relationship while increasing the overall team chemistry of the group. It is also an important moment where parents showcase their support by bringing pre-cooked dishes from home and have an opportunity to interact with the staff and key people in OIDI.

**Synopsis:** Once a year UNCW hosts a FAFSA day where MI CASA brings bilingual assistance to support UNCW’s Financial Aid department with Hispanic families. Only MI CASA’s senior class is required to attend this event.
Synopsis: Yearly event where Senior Mentors and Mentees reach their graduation milestone. The purpose of MI CASA is fulfilled as mentees make their way to college. On this day we recognize graduates with MI CASA completion certificates as we recruit an incoming cohort that replaces the graduating class.

Synopsis: MI CASA utilizes UNCW’s Ropes Course Leadership program to increase team chemistry, develop leadership skills while solidifying MI CASA’s overall objective. The ropes course forces all members to brainstorm together in order to tackle multiple challenges that are always related to real life situations.
Academic Activities

The following activities provide access to higher education and prepare mentees to further their education after High School.

**Synopsis:** High School students have the opportunity to become a college student for one day. They attend a minimum of three classes that correlate with their area of interest. “Seahawks for a Day” is made possible thanks to the large network of UNCW faculty that open up their classrooms for a once in a lifetime opportunity. Students personally experience the social and academic components of college.
Synopsis: Go over the Junior and Senior checklist to set early goals and map out tasks to be completed over the academic year. Senior class completes their UNCW application, and scholarship opportunities are introduced. Junior class learns about planning for college, national rankings, majors and related components like study abroad and scholarships. The day comes to a close with a luncheon social where the mentors and staff have an opportunity to meet the mentees’ parents and family members.
Synopsis: New cohort of mentors and mentees meet for the first time through a series of ice breakers and team building activities. Senior mentees listen to their mentor tips for college success touching on a variety of topics including scholarships, note taking strategies, professor/student dynamic, organization, money saving tips and a Q&A session.
Synopsis: MI CASA mentees receive support for three straight weekends from a licensed math teacher. Students also receive SAT prep books and additional tools that enable students to improve their SAT score. Prep book includes all the sections in the SAT; reading, math and writing.
**Synopsis:** This is just an example of our numerous academic meetings. Topics covered on these days include admissions, financial aid, student life, leadership opportunities, study skills, test preparation, time and finance management.