MENTORING MYTHS

**Myth:** In a college, you need to be an older person with gray hair (or no hair) to be a good mentor.

**Reality:** In a college, mentors can be young or old. Some of the most outstanding mentors of students are fellow students, or Peer Mentors.

**Myth:** Mentoring only happens one-to-one on a long-term basis.

**Reality:** At a big college, mentoring occurs in many different ways. Some mentoring relationships are traditional relationships involving a one-to-one setting over a long period of time. But effective mentoring can also occur in a group setting or even through a single encounter with a student.

**Myth:** Mentoring programs at colleges are only for high-achieving students, especially those who are honors and straight A students.

**Reality:** All college students need mentors, but according to research faculty in colleges spend most of their time working with high-achieving students. Programs like AMP are open opportunities in higher education to provide students with necessary support services such as mentoring to help them succeed academically and better serve their communities.

**Myth:** Only the person being mentored benefits from mentoring.

**Reality:** By definition, mentoring is a reciprocal relationship where both the mentor and mentee learn from each other.

**Myth:** By calling yourself a “Peer Mentor,” you become a mentor.

**Reality:** Not all experienced students who work with fellow student are Peer Mentors, even if they have that job title. Peer Mentors are those who have developed consciousness about mentoring and in their interactions with fellow students demonstrate respect, patience, trustworthiness, and strong communication skills, especially listening skills.
**Myth:** To become a mentor requires a lot of time and a lot of work.

**Reality:** Becoming a mentor requires a change in consciousness—i.e., how you think about yourself and how you think about others. Courses and training sessions can help experienced students to develop this consciousness. Mentoring is not a matter of working harder or longer or adding to your job responsibilities but seeing your work differently.

**Myth:** At a large college, one Peer Mentor can help only a limited number of students. Although a Peer Mentor may want to help large numbers of students, the cold reality is that she or her can only work with a select few.

**Reality:** Each interaction with a student is a mentoring opportunity, even a single encounter with a student. To effectively help a particular student or a group of students, Peer Mentors can draw upon this network of resources. Mentoring occurs in a community, not in isolation.