

Assessing peer mentoring: The case of MSU and its Space Science program.

KAS Science Education Session

Morehead State University (MSU) is one of a handful of universities that offers a Bachelor of Science degree in Space Science. The faculty and leadership of the Space Science Center have implemented a model of peer mentoring into the program. It is expected that peer mentoring will produce an efficient way to achieve the program's benchmarks, foster engineering skills amongst the students early in their undergraduate career, reduce student attrition, and promote a team-like relationship between upperclassmen and lowerclassmen and between students and faculty. The purpose of this talk is to report on the assessment of peer mentoring from the perspective of four students enrolled in the Space Science program. Data was collected through a semi-structured interview protocol, where participants were asked to describe experiences in which they were peer mentors and peer mentees, to list aspects of the peer mentoring process that were frustrating to them, to assess to what extent faculty members promote peer mentoring, and to recommend ways to make the peer mentoring process more effective. The data strongly suggest that the participants are enjoying their peer mentoring experience and perceive that they achieved meaningful theoretical and practical learning. The participants would not change significantly the program or their role in it, but did provide a number of recommendations to make the peer mentoring process and their academic experience more enriching and less stressful.