

Initial EPM Post-Graduation Outcomes Report

Marie Francois, November 3, 2023

Part I of this Embedded Peer Mentor (EPM) Post-Graduation Outcomes project investigating what has been happening with EPMs since they left CI suggests the EPM experience has a strong impact on post-graduation futures. The focus of the current research is on the two-thirds of the EPMs who have graduated since the program began in 2011 (64 of 95) who supported students in Learning Communities (LCs) and Living-Learning Communities (LLCs) between academic years 2011-12 and 2022-23.

The data collection thus far has followed two methods: (1) the dissemination of an EPM Post-graduation Information Google form to the 40 EPMS who supported Learning Communities for who email contacts were available (i.e. 66% of 63 LC/LLC EPMs) and (2) research through the CI student information system and social media combined with information shared by graduated EPMs. As of this writing 26 of the 40 EPMs contacted (41% of 63 LC/LLC EPMs) have responded on the EPM Post-graduation Information form. Here is a sample of answers to the final open-ended question on the form:

As a first-generation student, being a peer mentor allowed me to step into a role where students were able to see themselves in me. It motivated me to continue to break barriers in both my professional and educational goals so that these areas could reflect diverse group of individuals. (Class of 2016)

Recently, I have learned that several of Bill Gates teams are trained in TOP facilitation methods (same as the EPMs training) which has helped me land a few of my bigger partnership projects. As I network with more folks in and outside of higher ed, I am constantly asked where I received facilitation training. Not only does that training help me facilitate focus groups, scaffold survey questions, and lead conversations, but it also helps me identify measurable outcomes and communicate at all levels. (Class of 2015)

I obtained a full-time job after graduating from CI thanks to my training and experiences as an EPM, and was immediately able to work full-time in educational support programming at the university level and felt completely confident and competent in the field. Five plus years after graduation, I am still regularly reminding myself of facilitation skills, communication skills, and organization tactics that I learned as a sophomore at CI to utilize in a UNIV 150 course. I am forever grateful for the support, training, and just general opportunity that this program gave me. I would not be who I am today without it! (Class of 2018)

My current position very often involves involvement in meetings with entry level to executive level stakeholders. The mentoring opportunity gave me a chance to prepare meetings, practice public speaking and present in a concise and confident way. As a mentor, I also learned to work independently and coach others. All these acquired skills are crucial assets in my current position. (Class of 2020)

The embedded peer mentorship changed the trajectory of my life. The support that I was able to receive while serving as a peer mentor helped me excel at CSUCI and beyond. I was able to develop the skills and tools to be an effective leader in my community as well as excel in my professional career. (Class of 2017)

Before presenting more findings regarding post-graduation experiences of EPMs for whom we have information, some background and context for their experience as EPMs is necessary. While analysis in this report focuses on the subset of 63 EPMs supporting anchors of Learning and Living Learning Communities, it is important to recognize that their training and on-going weekly meetings where trouble shooting and skill building took place were among a broader team of mentors, and that individual mentors' assignments moved among the UNIV classes during their tenure.

Background and Context

The Embedded Peer Mentor program began in 2011 under our first HSI Title V grant Project ISLAS, with students embedded in UNIV classes. EPMs worked with faculty and supported students in First Year Seminars that anchor linked learning communities and Transfer Year Seminars. UNIV 250 Second Year Seminar was added to the program under the CSU Giving Students a Compass Grant, building a pipeline with Oxnard College, and then through Project OLAS support. Project ALAS picked up support for the EPMs in UNIV 349, which became UNIV 350 B, C, and D when the course was modified to meet new CSU GE requirements.

The Embedded Peer Mentors in this study helped students develop a sense of belonging at CI and build academic skills, working with a cohort of students throughout the semester, and in the case of Learning Communities, throughout the academic year. EPMs participated in at least 70 hours of training rooted in Technology of Participation (ToP®) Facilitation Methods best practices, some of it common training Peer Education and Equity Programs (PEEP) with other peer mentors in what today is SASEI. Training takes place across two sessions (May/August) on: academic coaching and social integration strategies; resource referrals; study skill building; large/small group facilitation; active learning strategies; working with faculty partners; and culturally-relevant pedagogy. They continued training in weekly meetings to troubleshoot challenges regarding their caseload of mentees, continue to hone facilitation and presentation skills and learn from campus partners (i.e., Program chairs; Advising; CAPS; DASS; LRC; Centers) about resources for referring students. They also had regular one-on-ones with program staff and faculty partners. EPMs' participated in the planning and implementation of events with the Learning Community and Living Learning Community Coordinators (the latter a collaboration with HRE) and LC faculty teams across the academic year. EPMs work up to 15 hours a week (20 if embedded in two classes). They attended UNIV classes anchoring LC/LLCs once a week, leading a student success activity/intervention for 30 minutes, and then meet with groups of 5-6 students in Dolphin Interest Groups (DIGs) outside of class for an hour (each group every other week). In Transfer Year Experience classes, the DIGs were monthly. EPMs also held regular "student hours" to consult with mentees one-on-one. They collaborated with faculty on student success efforts, and they conferred on students of concern. Over 11 years, the mentors developed a PEEP Toolshed of nearly 100 activities for use in class and DIGs (with Toolkits also used by SASEI mentors, EOP mentors, and community college mentor programs).

EPMs carried a caseload ranging from 15-40 mentees from start to finish in the semester they were embedded. The LC/LLC mentors continue engagement and academic support efforts with the fall cohort into the following semester through visiting spring LC classes, continuing DIGs, and helping organize events. EPMs are different from "teaching assistants" or tutors in

that they are not graders or emerging disciplinary experts. Rather, they are instructional student assistants that build expertise in academic skills coaching that supports students in all disciplines; help students develop time-management strategies; refer mentees to Academic Advising, tutoring, writing center, DASS, CAPS, etc.; facilitate inclusive group interactions; model student engagement in the classroom; and build a sense of belonging. They are an integral part of a designated for-credit class each week. “Interventions” in class or in DIGs are based on needs of a particular DIG cohort or through consultation with faculty partners about what best aligns with the course or the LC theme. EPMs file Qualtrics reflection reports following each intervention; these serve to inform program leadership of successes and challenges faced by EPMs in real time, and shape ongoing training/oversight to help mentors improve and grow their skill sets.

Table 1 below indicates how many UNIV courses were supported by mentors from 2011-12 to 2021-22. The totals exceed the number of mentors (N = 95), because one mentor supported more than one cohort/class in a given year, and the majority of mentors worked for the program for more than one year. The 94 EPMs together mentored nearly 4,900 students in all, for an average of 52 mentees each. For EPMs supporting LC/LLC sections, more than 2,200 first-year students in all, for an average of 35 mentees each.

Table 1. EPM-supported UNIV classes							
Year	UNIV 100/LC	UNIV 150/ LC & LLC	UNIV 198/LLC	UNIV 250	UNIV 349/350	Total	EPM Head count
2011-12		4		1		5	5
2012-13		5		3	4	12	8
2013-14		6		3	8	17	10
2014-15		10		6	9	25	14
2015-16		10	1	6	9	26	14
2016-17		13	2	7	9	31	20
2017-18		12	1	8	11	32	15
2018-19	2	15	1	7	10	35	22
2019-20	2	10	1	8	9	30	23
2020-21		12	1	5	6	24	19
2021-22		13	1	4	7	25	15
2022-23		18	1	1	4	24	18
Total	4	128	9	59	86	286	

Overview of All EPMs

Below are snapshots of the EPM experience for the 94 individuals who worked as an EPM who either graduated or otherwise left the university (5 transferred or withdrew), drawing on Appendix 1: Tenure and Assignments for EPMs (which flows chronologically). Of the 94 EPMs, 63 supported first-year students in a Learning Community or Living-Learning Community in their tenure in the job at CI.

Table 2. Tenure as an EPM					
3.5 years	3 years	2.5 years	2 years	1.5 years	1 year
3	12	4	29	8	38

3%	13%	4%	31%	9%	40%
----	-----	----	-----	----	-----

Table 3. Number of UNIV sections supported in their tenure as an EPM

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
2	3	4	12	14	13	24	22
2%	3%	4%	13%	15%	14%	26%	23%

Table 4. Number of EPMs who have supported specific UNIV cohorts

LC/LLC anchor	Second Year Seminar	Transfer Year Seminar
63	20	33

While EPMs identify across a gender spectrum including “Gender Non-Conforming,” using the limited binary gender model the count is 15 male and 48 female for the LC/LLC cohort, and 26 male and 68 female for all EPMs. The majority of former EPMs (74 of 94) are from historically under-represented groups (HUGs). Among the 89 EPMs with baccalaureate degrees from CI, 24% graduated with honors: three Summa Cum Laude, four Magna Cum Laude, and 14 Cum Laude.

What we know about LC/LLC EPMs post-graduation

Of the 63 EPMs who supported Learning Community cohorts, we have post-baccalaureate study or employment information for 54 of them. As seen below in Table 5, at least half of the 63 have either completed a post-bac degree or are in graduate school, most of them at the Master’s level. At least 73% of the 63 LC/LLC EPMs are employed, with Education and Health Care the leading sectors.

Table 5. Employment and Education of LC/LLC EPMs

Employment Sector		Post-baccalaureate Education	
Education	10	Ph.D. Candidate	2
Engineering	3	3 rd Year Medical Student	1
Finance	3	Master’s Degree	13
Food Service	2	Master’s in progress	10
Government and Public Administration	3	Teaching credential	2
Health Care	10	Credential in progress	3
Health Technology	3	Certificate	3
Higher Education	2	Pharmacy Tech license in progress	1
Marketing and STEM	1	BSN in progress (has Health Sci BS)	1
Non-profit	4		
Public Safety	1		
Real Estate	2		

Scientific research	1		
Sales	1		
Total	46		34

Of the 40 LC/LLC EMPs for whom email addresses are known, as of this writing 26 have responded to the EPM Post-graduation Information form. Current salaries range up to “six figures” (answered in the “other” option). Including this “other” answer, eight of the respondents are earning over \$80,000 a year. Sixteen of the 25 respondents (64%) are making more than \$40,000 annually working full-time.

O. If you are willing to share, what is your annual gross income?

26 responses

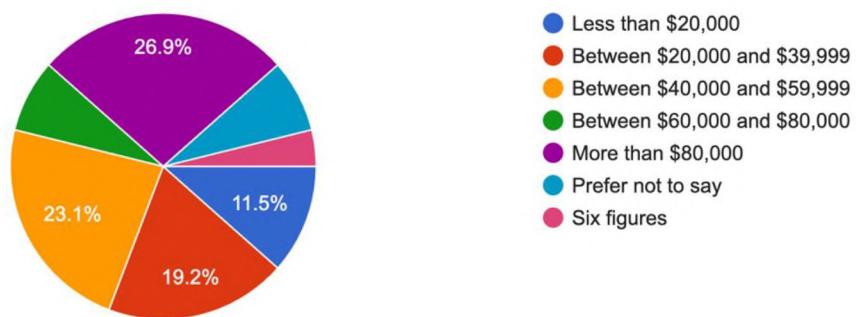


Table 6 breaks out the reported salaries by graduation years and degree-level. The highest salaries, those in the “more than \$80,000” range, include those with B.A.s (including the “six figures” respondent) and Master’s degrees, and this degree of salary attainment has been achieved between three and eight years out from graduation. Eight of the respondents are working on graduate degrees (four of them working full-time and four part-time), which presumably will translate into higher salaries when the degrees are completed.

Table 6. Salaries Aligned with Graduation Year and Highest Degree LC/LLC EPMs

Salary Range	Status	Year Graduated	Highest Degree
More than \$80,000	FT	2015	B.A.
	FT	2015	M.S.
	FT	2017	B.A.
	FT	2018	M.P.A.
	FT	2019	M.Eng.
	FT	2019	M.S.
	FT	2019	M.S.
	FT	2020	B.S.
Between \$60,000 and \$80,000	FT	2016	M.P.A.P.
	FT	2020	B.S.*
Between \$40,000 and \$59,999	FT	2017	B.S.
	FT	2020	B.S.

	FT	2021	B.A.
	FT	2022	Credential
	FT	2022	B.S.
	FT	2023	B.S.*
Between \$20,000 and \$39,999	PT	2021	B.A.
	FT	2022	B.A.*
	PT	2022	B.S.*
	FT	2022	B.S.*
	PT	2023	B.A.*
Less than \$20,000	PT	2018	B.A.
	PT	2021	B.S.*
	PT	2023	B.S.*

*In graduate school

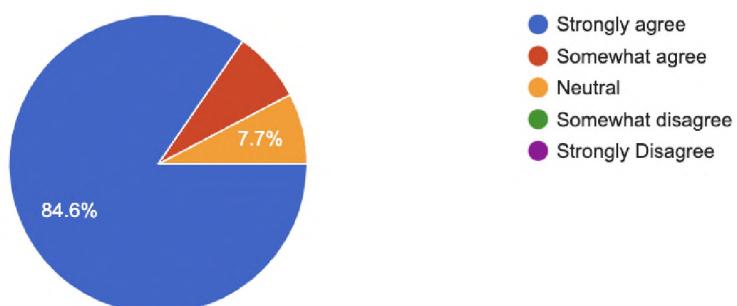
What LC/LLC EPMS tell us about the connection between EPM role and post-graduation

Twenty-five LC/LLC EPMs (20 female, 5 male) answered the EPM Post-Graduation survey. The vast majority of respondents indicate that they continue to use skills they gained as an EPM in professional and graduate settings (84.6% strongly agree; 7.7% somewhat agree) (Question D below). Most of them agree at 96.1% (69.2% strongly agree and 26.9% somewhat agree) that the EPM position expanded their perception of what was possible in terms of career options (Question E below). Fewer, at 84.7% (38.5% strongly agree and 46.2% somewhat agree), agree that the EPM position expanded their perception of what was possible for post-graduate studies (Question F below). In terms of whether the EPM position expanded their perception of their own potential for satisfaction at work, 95.1% agree (76.9% strongly agree and 19.2% somewhat agree) (Question G below).

D. Choose the best answer for this Peer Education and Equity Programs (PEEP) leadership competency and your experience as an EPM:

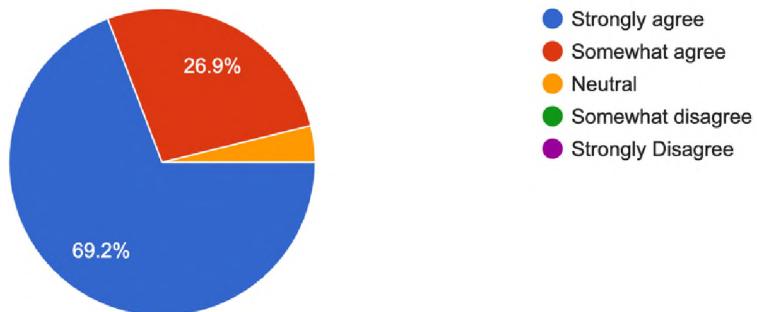
"I continue to put into practice the knowledge and professional skills gained as an embedded peer mentor, in order to realize leadership potential and facilitate change in communities at CI and beyond."

26 responses



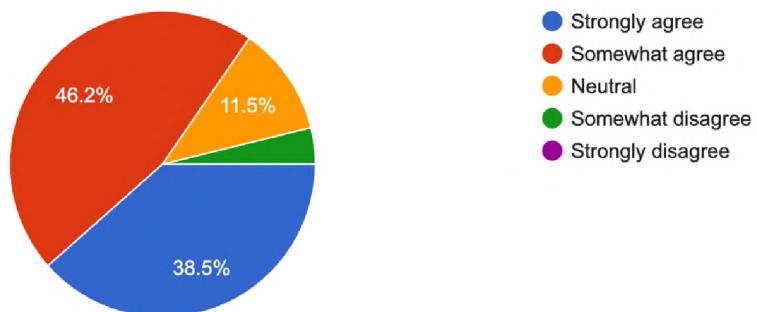
E. My peer position expanded my perception of what was possible for me in terms of career options.

26 responses



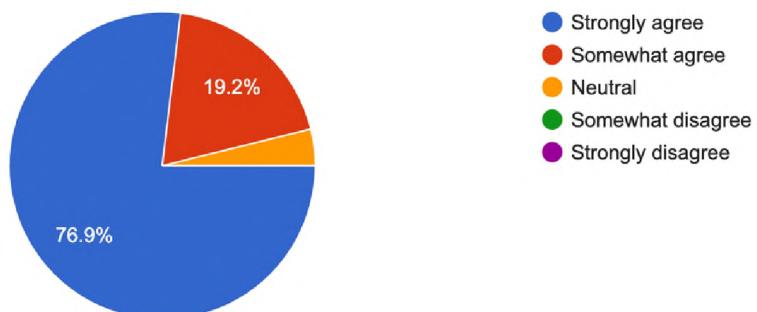
F. The peer position expanded my perception of what was possible for me in terms of post-graduate studies.

26 responses



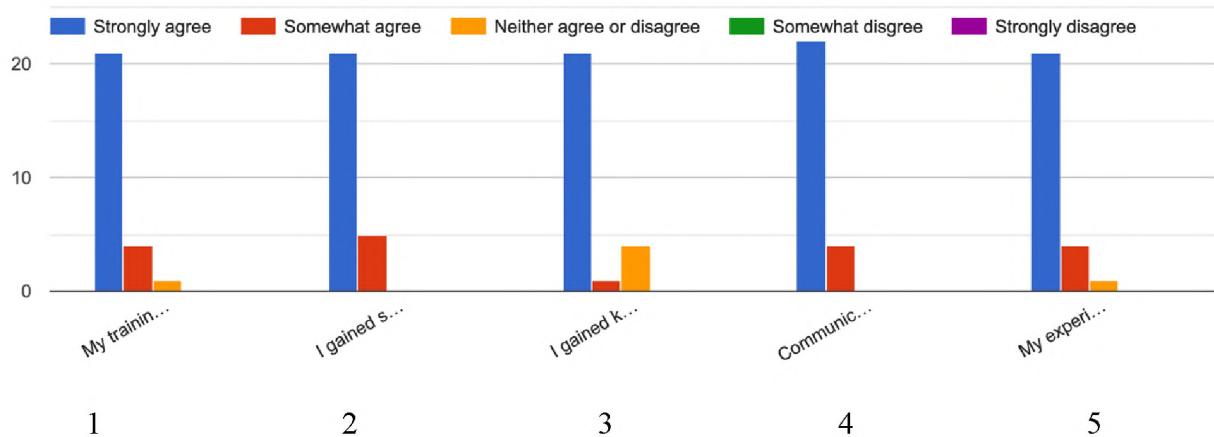
G. The peer position expanded my perceptions of what was possible for my own potential for satisfaction in work.

26 responses



The EPM Post-Graduate Information survey repeated a question asked in a 2019 Peer Leader Alumni survey for PEEP, Question H below, related to the transfer of skills and experience from the EPM work to professional and post-grad educational settings. Here are the answers of the 25 respondents in 2023.

H. Please answer the following questions related to the relevance of your peer position at CSUCI and your post-graduate experience.



1. My training for and/or experience in my peer position prepared me for the workforce or grad school.
2. I gained skills in my peer position that have enhanced my professional capacity at work or grad school.
3. I gained knowledge in my peer position that has allowed me to facilitate change in my community and/or at work.
4. Communication skills learned in my peer position have enhanced my capacity at work or grad school.
5. My experience working with people of diverse backgrounds in my peer position prepared me for success at work and/or in my community.

The highest aggregate rating is related to communication skills, no. 4. This finding is amplified by open-ended answers in the survey:

"I use the skills that I learned in this position almost every single day in my career. Facilitation and communication are not often taught in the workforce but it is an expected skill. Having these skills have allowed me to surpass others when it comes to interviews and communicating essential information to the public."

"My work as an EPM allowed me to improve my interpersonal skills as well as build leadership competencies that are much needed in my future career in healthcare. I did not realize how much of an impact PEEP had on my life until I stepped into graduate school. These strong keystones allowed me to keep my equity lenses on as I navigated through tough conversations in business and healthcare."

These answers align with no. 1, the peer position providing preparation for workforce or grad school:

"Being a EPM provided me many opportunities in graduate school that I would otherwise not have had. Because of my work as an EPM, my graduate school offered me fellowships and a spot as a iSchool Graduate Scholar."

"Being an EPM helped me to gain self-confidence, access to great networking opportunities, and necessary skills that translated well into my growing career and postgraduate life."

"Constant support and feedback from supervisors and staff, helped shape me and made me more confident at work and school."

These answers align with no. 2, enhancing professional capacity:

"As an aspiring educator, the EPM program gave me critical training, skills, and experience that have enhanced my teaching abilities."

"This program has helped me to understand the benefits of networking and it has taught me to be a great public speaker. I have met so many amazing people that I continue to speak to, to this day. Because of PEEPs and my experience I had from being an Embedded Peer Mentor, it helped me to realize what I bring to the table and how my skills can help others. In fact, being in PEEPs showed me that I actually want to be a teacher."

"Working as an EPM has allowed me to build on my confidence to set boundaries in the workplace and be more willing to voice my values and opinions."

Another open-ended answer hits a number of these questions, perhaps especially no. 2 and no. 3:

"I've applied a lot of the skills I imparted on my peer mentees as time management, active learning strategies, and methods in combating imposter syndrome. Professional development strategies, such as creating a system that would allow me to answer emails in a timely manner, have helped me meet deadlines for grants and scholarships that have kept me going in school. Taught me community engagement skills that was A) crucial to my acceptance here at Michigan State University' Medical School, and B) Allows me to pursue my passions of community development in medicine. I've been able to establish close partnerships with community leaders that have eventually turned into friendships. This, in turn, tuned into projects that directly impacted the community."

Additional responses align with no. 3 and no. 5 on facilitating change in the community:

"The impact of my work as a former embedded peer mentor at CI has allowed me to continue applying and building my skills working with my students. I am currently working as an Afterschool Program Leader. In this role, I help my students with homework and plan/facilitate physical education activities/arts and crafts. Being an Afterschool Program Leader has allowed me to continue using some of the resources/skills I learned as a former peer mentor which includes the PEEP interventions and facilitation tools."

“The work I did as an embedded peer mentor helped prepare me for life after college. I am not the director of childcare for the YMCA serving families in need. Learning all the tools I got from being a EPM helped me reach my goal.”

“Creating community will always have impact and being a driver of that is fulfilling and beautiful. I felt I had the ability to make students feel connected and like they weren’t alone.”

“Working with high school kids currently, I feel like I know how to relate to them better from my experience as a mentor.”

In 2019, there were 13 graduated EPM respondents to the Peer Leader Alumni survey, 5 of whom also answered the EPM Post Graduate Information Survey for LC/LLC EPMs. Over the four years, their answers are consistently positive, with one whose answer for the first three was “Somewhat Agree” showed improvement:

Table 7. Comparison of EPM survey answers from 2019 and 2023										
	Class of 2015		Class of 2016		Class of 2017		Class of 2018		Class of 2018	
	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023	2019	2023
My training for and/or experience in my peer position prepared me for the workforce or grad school.	SA	SA	SWA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA
I gained skills in my peer position that have enhanced my professional capacity at work or grad school.	SA	SA	SWA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA
I gained knowledge in my peer position that has allowed me to facilitate change in my community and/or at work.	SA	SA	SWA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA
Communication skills learned in my peer position have enhanced my capacity at work or grad school.	SA	SA								
My experience working with people of diverse backgrounds in my peer position prepared me for success at work and/or in my community.	SA	SA								

Conclusion

The Embedded Peer Mentor program at CI has proven to be extremely impactful on the post-graduation success for students who worked as instructional student assistants supporting UNIV students, in Learning Communities and beyond. One survey respondent notes: “It was a transformational experience not only for the students we worked with but also myself.”

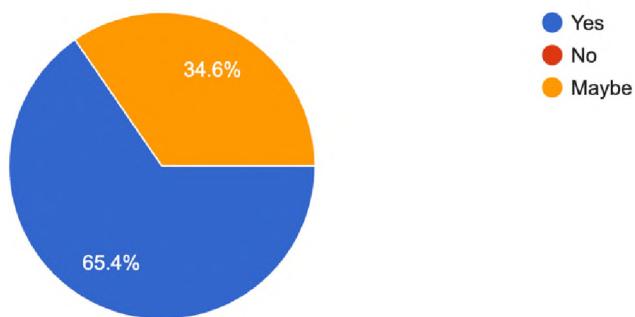
More work can be done breaking down the impact on first-generation EPMs (there was not time for this initial report to get that level of information from IR), and to investigate intersections such as first gen, HUG, and gender. As 23 of the 63 LC/LLC Mentors did not have the experience as first-year students in a Learning Community, another question is comparison of those who did and did not take UNIV 150 or 198. Some of the LCLLC EPMs did have a peer

mentor outside of the LLCs, in either UNIV 250 or 349/350. So another question could be on the impact of having a mentor, apart from the LC experience. Another question, though the N may be too small to determine significance, is the degree to which tenure as an EPM, and/or number of sections served (which may include more faculty partners) impacts post-graduate success. And the non-LC/LLC EPMs will also get the current EPM Post-Graduation Outcomes Information survey (attached as Appendix 2) as more contact information is obtained, to see gauge the post-graduation experience of those supporting the sophomore and transfer seminars. From an expanded group of respondents, comparisons and contrasts can be drawn from those in the LC/LLC set who also supported UNIV 250 or UNIV 349/350 and those who did not support LCs in their tenure (c.f. Appendix 1). Another area for more research is to compare the accomplishments of these EPMs in terms of employment, salary, and graduate school attainment to their non-EPM cohorts in terms of year graduated, major, etc.

These and other questions will be included in Part II of this study, working with Marcella Cuellar (HSI researcher at UC Davis, and former UNIV 150 faculty) to build a more in-depth survey and focus group questions for submission to IRB. Of the 26 EPMs from LC/LLCs who filled out the Information form, none of them have ruled out participating in focus groups, and most of them are interested in doing so.

Q. Are you interested in being part of a zoom focus-group in Step Three of this project (likely in April-July 2023) to talk about the impact of your job as an EPM?

26 responses



Appendix 1. Tenure and assignments for EPMS*

EPM	# years employed				# of sections supported						Total
	1	2	3	4	U100	U150	U198	U250	U300	U349/50	
1		x				2				1	3
2		x				2					2
3			X			3					3
4			X			2				2	4
5		x						2		2	4
6		x						OC		2	3
7			x			1		5			6
8	x					1					1
9		X				2		1		1	4
10		X				2					2
11		X				2		1			3
12		X				1				4	5
13		X				2					2
14			2.5			4		2			6
15		x				2		6			8
16		x				3					3
17		X				4					4
18			2.5							5	5
19		x								5	5
20	x					1					1
21	x							1			1
22		x				2					2
23	x					1					1
24		x				2					2
25	x					1	1				2
26		x								5	5
27	x									2	2
28		1.5				2					2
29		X				2					2
30		X								1	1
31		1.5								3	3
32		X								3	3
33		X					1				1
34		X					1				1
35		X								1	1
36	x							2			2
37		x				3				1	4
38			x					6			6
39			x		1	4				2	7
40		x						4			4
41		X				3					3
42		x						4			4
43	x									2	2
44		1.5								5	5
45	x					1					1
46	x					1					1
47	x					1				1	2
48		X				1					3
49		X				2					2

50		x		3				1	4
51		x		4					4
52		x		4					4
53	x			2					2
54	x			2					2
55		2.5		3			1		4
56		x	[105]	3					4
57	x			1	1				2
58		2.5				5			5
59			3.5	1		6			7
60	x					3			3
61	1.5					3			3
62	x							4	4
63	X							2	2
64	x							5	5
65	x		1						1
66	x		1						1
67			3.5	1 & 2 105s	3	1			7
68			3.5	1	6		1		8
69	X				1				1
70	x			4			1		5
71	x					1			1
72	1.5							3	3
73	x					1			1
74	x			1					1
75	1.5					3	1	1	5
76	x							2	2
77	x							1	1
78	x			3					3
79	x			5				1	6
80	1.5			1 & 105	1		1		4
81	x		1	2		2			5
82	X			2					2
83	x			3	[210]		1		5
84	x		1	1					2
85	x				1		1		2
86	x						1	1	2
87	1.5							5	5
88	X			2					2
89	X			1					1
90	X			1					1
91	X			1			1		2
92	X			1					1
93	X			1					1
94	x							1	1
				4 LC	54	8	20	6	33

Appendix 2. EPM Post-Graduation Information Form

Pdf attached with email.