

Best Practice II: Mentorship

1. Objectives

Hansraj College has a uniquely successful Mentorship program, which it instituted in 2016. It is aimed at supporting the incoming adolescents in acclimatizing with the college, fellow students, coursework, and helping them navigate any other issues they may be facing. This program is particularly useful for the outstation students, who often experience significant changes in their environment and expectations from them.

2. Context

Today, more than two thirds of Hansraj's students are from outside Delhi. Often living in hostels and paying guest accommodation away from the known comforts of their homes, they are suddenly ushered into an unfamiliar territory on many fronts. Besides dealing with a tough academic regime in an unknown city, they are all-responsible for the daily chores of washing, cleaning, food, transportation, and so on. These students need active help, especially in their early days of settling down, to tide over the challenges of their new existence.

Besides, several students struggle with the coursework, and can benefit by additional guidance. Our mentorship program fulfils that.

3. Practice

The college begins its academic year with mentorship days. On the assigned day, every new student is allocated a teacher mentor, which remains steady for that year. Each teacher has approximately twenty mentees. On the mentorship days, the students meet their mentors, and the nuances of the mentorship program are explained. While there is a designated slot for mentorship during the week, mentors are available to the mentees virtually all the time. Under mentorship, we commit to a larger stake in the holistic growth and well-being of the students, counselling them about their academic, emotional, and other needs. As the primary stakeholder, the student is encouraged to share any learning problems being faced in the classes or the tutorial systems. Mentors often act as the sounding board to the students, whereby while sharing their challenges, students are guided to come up with solutions too. These personal interactions and student-feedback also provides valuable inputs while assessing the interest in and utility of the Elective courses.

Starting this year, the teachers have extended the mentorship program beyond the college curriculum to also cover the academic challenges that students face while preparing for entrance examinations. Another progression has been to enroll academically strong and communicative senior students to expand the bandwidth for mentorship and coaching junior students.

4. Outcomes

Mentorship has had a strong role in assisting the acclimatization and development of the student community towards successful careers paths. Resolving conflicts and hindrances through mentors always leads to channelization of student energy into positive avenues of learning and development. One way that the established mentorship program tremendously helped in this pandemic year was by assisting the remote students navigate through the unprecedented learning challenges and maintaining contact with the students and teachers. Also, thanks partly to the Mentorship program, Hansraj College had a good line-up of internships and placements this year, despite all the woes of the pandemic.

5. Evidence of success

Cases of bullying and harassment are often first brought to the attention to the mentor. These are not confined to reports within the college but also outside. There have been cases of students calling up their mentors at quite late hours to share their issues. At times, those stresses may even be due to communication gaps with their parents. On several occasions, mentors have engaged in counselling both the students and their parents to alleviate the problems ailing the student. In the COVID pandemic years, the established mentorship program helped immensely in guiding the mentees through the various challenges of remote learning. This program has played a vital role in making HRC students among the best adjusted in the University.

6. Problems encountered and resources required

This program hinges on the commitment of teachers to go out of their way to allay the teething problems for the incoming students. Their endeavour is to help the students gain confidence in navigating through their new environment. This is a time-intensive activity and that often acts as a constraint in scaling up the program. To address this challenge, the college is expanding the initiative by inducting senior students who are capable of providing academic mentorship to their juniors.