**Increasing the Number of Participants in ACSA’s Mentorship Program**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

**Background**

The Arts Co-op Student Association (ACSA) represents the student body responsible for bringing together Arts Co-op students, alumni and staff in order to enhance the cooperative education experience. ACSA offers its members the opportunity to network with established professionals, attend résumé building workshops and participate in mock job interviews. A fundamental component of ACSA is the mentorship program which aims to facilitate professional relationships between students and those already in the workforce.

Established in 1999, ACSA has seen an increase in the number of participants in the mentorship program with the exception of the last two years. The 2019/2020 cohort saw a total of 40 participants (20 mentors and 20 mentees) take part in the program; this represents a 50% decrease from the year prior which saw a total of 80 participants. The lack of social media promotion for the program has contributed to the decline and will be addressed further as part of this proposal.

**Statement of Problem**

If current trends continue and the mentorship program finds that it cannot sustain itself, it will be difficult for ACSA to meet its objective for providing students an opportunity to network and learn from established professionals. There are three major implications of this problem. Firstly, ACSA may see a reduction in membership rates across the board if the mentorship program is no longer being offered. Secondly, it will be more difficult for ACSA to request funding from AMS and the Arts Co-op Office in order to support the club. And thirdly, students and professionals that wish to be part of a mentoring relationship will be denied the invaluable experience to do so.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this report is to determine the number of current participants in the mentorship program in comparison to previous years and analyze why participation rates in the program have been steadily declining. The goal is to identify factors that compel ACSA students to join the mentorship program and then develop a strategic marketing plan for promoting the mentorship program to a wider audience. These findings and strategies will be shared with ACSA executives in the hopes that Mentorship Program continues to grow and benefit Arts Co-op Students.

**Scope**

To assess the feasibility of developing a strategic marketing plan for promoting the mentorship program with the aim of recruiting more participants, the intention is to pursue the following five areas of interest in this report:

1. Current participants in the mentorship program for the 2020/2021 cohort in comparison to previous years.
2. Current social media statistics with regard to ACSA’s social media platforms. Levels of engagement (i.e. likes, comments) with posts relating to the mentorship program.
3. Thoughts about the purpose of mentoring relationships. Ways this can be marketed based on social media trends.
4. Feedback from previous mentees/mentors about the structure of the program.
5. Costs associated with an online marketing campaign designed

**Methods**

Primary data sources used include consultations with past and current ACSA executives through the use of online surveys. Additionally, the implementation of oral surveys with a small number of former and current ACSA members will shed light on challenges to recruitment that may not be visible to someone outside of the program. The general student body also engaged with an online survey that aimed to determine how much of a profile the mentorship program has and highlight opinions on ideas of a successful recruitment plan.

Secondary sources discussed in this report are publications about the effectiveness of online marketing strategies in recruitment for student-led activities, this includes, “The Role of Entrepreneurship Clubs and Societies in Entrepreneurial Learning” by Luke Pittaway. Past transition reports created by former ACSA executives leading the mentorship chair were also consulted which highlighted the declining participation rates (Hussain 12).

**DATA SECTION**

**Survey Analysis**

The purpose of this interview was to obtain primary data for an analysis and investigation that aimed to provide recommendations for increasing the number of participants in the UBC Arts Co-op Student Association (ACSA) Mentorship Program. The data gathered from this survey determined whether an online marketing strategy could combat the low participation rate found in the program and will be further discussed in the recommendations section of this report.

Figure 1: Survey Question One

The first survey question posed to survey respondents aimed to generate a sense of how ACSA is promoting the mentorship program. As evident by the results in Figure 1, 35% of respondents rated 2 out of 5 in terms of ACSA’s performance (1=low opinion to 5=high opinion). 30% of respondents rated ACSA’s promotional performance a 3 out of 5 indicating some room for improvement.

Figure 2: Survey Question 2

The survey results from question 2 as outlined in Figure 2, indicated that many (43%) of the participants in the Mentorship Program learned about the program through social media. The next most popular choice was ‘Word of Mouth,’ indicating that the participants are broadcasting their experiences following the conclusion of the program. It would appear that the ACSA website is the least effective way of educating students about the benefits of the Mentorship Program as only (7%) of students learned of the program through that medium.

**CONCLUSION**

**Recommendations**

The goal of any organization whether big or small is to continue growing and providing good-quality service. In the case of the ACSA Mentorship Program, further action is needed to explore why participation numbers have steadily declined. By addressing the five areas of inquiry mentioned above, a determination can be made whether a strategic online marketing plan would reverse these trends.

Supported by the primary data in the form of online surveys, a reasonable conclusion could be made that ACSA would benefit from increasing the number of promotional materials shared on social media. Since the club may not have money to implement a professional marketing company in order to implement this, a suggestion would be to dedicate a role within ACSA specifically for this purpose and hire a student that has specific experience in marketing, communications and social media management.

**Works Cited**

Hussain, Bashara. “ACSA Mentorship Chair Transition Report 2019/2020.” *UBC Arts Co-op*

*Student Association*, 2020.

**Note**

\*This draft report does not contain: a letter of transmittal, an abstract, a list of illustrations, the full summary of the survey results (including graphs/images), appendices and the final list of references. However these will be included in the final revision of the formal report.