

Students Helping Students: A Guide for peer Educators on College Campuses

by Steven C. Ender and Fred B. Newton, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2000, 254 pages, \$16.95, (paperback).

Working with and training student leaders can be one of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of working with college students. *Students Helping Students: A Guide for peer Educators on College Campuses* captures the essence of what makes being a peer educator both enjoyable and successful.

This book is chiefly designed as a broad introduction for any student interested in being a peer educator on a college campus. The primary text and accompanying trainer's manual are well designed to serve as the basis for a training class on any type of peer education position, from resident assistants to orientation leaders to academic advisors. The authors focus on several topics: role modeling, student development, diversity, counseling/helping skills, problem solving, group process, leadership, study skills, referral, and ethics. *Student Helping Students* has been well designed to complement the classroom atmosphere with learning objectives at the beginning and summary questions at the conclusion of each chapter.

The primary strength of *Student Helping Students* is its usability. The authors have done an excellent job of narrowing the focus of the book to the ten topics/chapters. At 254 pages, including references, the work is inviting rather than overwhelming for students new to the peer helper role. By excluding other arguably relevant topics the authors have allowed instructors using the book to add their own specific topics and examples while allowing the work as a whole to be applicable to the wide range of roles peer educators are assuming on campuses across the country.

The book is particularly strengthened by its outstanding emphasis on diversity, role modeling, and ethics. The chapter on diversity written by a guest author, Ata U. Karim, is extremely impressive in its ability to address a large number of diversity concepts simply, swiftly, and effectively. The chapter blends theory and practice smoothly by presenting concepts and examples useful to students ready for a wide range diversity challenges, while keeping the tone reassuring enough not to intimidate those with limited experience working with those different from themselves.

Role modeling, as a theme, is well woven throughout the entire work. *Students Helping Students* begins with a chapter on role modeling and ends with a superbly chosen chapter on ethics focusing on role modeling. The authors emphasize that despite all other efforts, poor leadership and unexamined ethical decisions will render any peer educator ineffective.

The work could benefit from some real life examples or comments from students in a few chapters that, at times, allow reader interest to be lulled by details. However, the book is clearly designed as a companion for a training class and regularly guides the reader through thinking about examples from his or her own personal life or what they may expect to encounter in their future roles as peer educators.

The authors of *Students Helping Students* have avoided the common temptation to create an exhaustive list of topics and chapters skillfully. This textbook is not as comprehensive as other student training books, designed for a specific peer mentor group, such as, *The resident assistant: Applications and strategies for working with college students in residence halls*, (Blimling, 1999). While this work may not be as complete a reference tool as other works,

its focus creates an inviting text for students new to the peer helper role.

This work is based on an earlier book Steven Ender co-authored, of nearly the same title, *Students Helping Students: A Training Manual for Peer Helpers on the College Campus* (Ender, McCaffrey, and Miller, 1979). In this guide, Ender shares the authorship with Fred B. Newton. While the title and the topic maybe similar, the content of this textbook is more than an updated edition of a previous book. These authors have reflected a more current emphasis on role modeling, diversity, ethics, and leadership that is applicable to the contemporary role of peer educators.

In summary, *Students Helping Students* is an excellent textbook for those unsatisfied with the texts specific to their peer educator roles. Students are able to glean excellent basic skills from the text, while allowing trainers the freedom to add role and campus specific examples.

References

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