Residents' Interaction with their College Living-Learning Peer Mentor: A Grounded Theory

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RESIDENTS’ INTERACTION WITH THEIR COLLEGE LIVING-LEARNING PEER MENTOR: A GROUNDED THEORY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Jonathan Patrick Wylie
May 2012

Accepted by
Dr. Pamela Havice, Committee Chair
Dr. Tony Cawthon
Dr. Douglas Hallenbeck
Dr. Wade Livingston
ABSTRACT

This study used Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) grounded theory model to describe and explain the stories of residents’ interactions with their peer mentor, in a health, education, and human development living-learning community (LLC). The question answered in this study was: What is the impact of the interaction between a peer mentor and residents within a living-learning community? Two sub-questions were asked: (1) How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members academically? and (2) How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members socially?

The LLC had 43 residents, a resident director, an academic coordinator, and one peer mentor. For this study, 14 students, the peer mentor, the resident director of the building, and the academic coordinator for the LLC were interviewed. The participants were first emailed and then from the responding students the researcher used snowball sampling to identify other participants. Data was gathered through in depth, semi-structured interviews, documents important to the LLC or peer mentor position, and observations by the researcher at activities and programs. Interview questions were created from the theoretical frame work of Greenleaf’s (1996) servant leadership theory and Kohlberg’s (1981) cognitive moral development theory. Data collection and analysis happened concurrently using Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) grounded theory procedures which included microanalysis, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The grounded theory for LLC residents’ interactions with their peer mentor is described and
explained through the words of the participants along with a visual model of this explanation.

The researcher discovered three emerging themes from the data: (1) characteristics of the peer mentor, (2) environments of the living-learning community, and (3) decision making. The researcher found the residents’ interaction with the peer mentor enhanced the decision making of the residents. The characteristics and the environment created provided an avenue for the students to process decisions from a day-to-day basis as well as with the future in perspective. Not all the residents interacted with the peer mentor on a daily basis but explained they knew if they needed the peer mentor then she would be there for them. The peer mentor characteristics’ along with the environment helped the students make decisions to benefit them academically and socially.
DEDICATION

I would like to first and foremost dedicate this dedication to Emily Wylie, my beloved bride of 2151 days, the most beautiful among women. I may have needed the signatures of my committee to finish this degree but I could not have finished without you.

Lydda Grace, your smile and large personality have given me inspiration at just the right time. Wade, watching you run around the room and listening to you laugh have encouraged me. Lydda Grace, Wade, and any future children let this Psalm be a reminder of why I dedicate this dissertation to you: “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”

I dedicate this dissertation to both my mom and my dad. I appreciate how much you encouraged me to go to school and pursue a higher education degree. I am so thankful that you have corrected and rebuked me. This not only made me the person I am today but also was used to sanctify me the most.

Last but not least, I dedicate this dissertation to my savior, Jesus Christ. My heart is expressed through Isaiah 26:8, “Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, I wait for you; your name and even your renown are the desires of my heart.”
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Chapter One introduces the research study, an investigation of how residents of a living-learning community interact with their peer mentor. The chapter begins by explaining that there is a need for research on how peer mentors affect living-learning communities and how this study of a peer mentor will contribute to the knowledge and practice of living-learning communities. Also included in Chapter One is an overview of the theoretical lens used for the study and an overview of the research site. The chapter is concluded with the limitations of the study and definitions of terms in order to provide context for major key terms.

In the early 20th century, as seen in the quote below, scholars and practitioners of higher education identified and embraced the importance of peer education in the context of the collegiate community. Poteat (1998) stated:

"The personal relations in which we have found our happiness supply also the best part of our education...The less formal part of our education process is the more important. It is our fellowships which educate us...fellowships make the opportunity for the subtle interplay of life upon life which is the heart of education. Our fellowships form our ideals, they infect us with their virtues and vices, they set our standards, they determine our attitudes, they fashion our lives. (p.14)

This “less formal part of our education,” of which Poteat (1998) spoke in his posthumously published 1908 Bacaalaureate Address, was fueled and nurtured in many ways by what are now identified as divisions and departments within Student Affairs. The import of these informal peer and student-faculty educational relationships was
identified over 100 years ago. Only recently have universities sought to intentionally create and support communities designed to facilitate personal relations and fellowships which, in turn, increase student learning and success (Meiklejohn, 1932; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Meiklejohn (1932) was a pioneer of living-learning communities within the academic realm. The basics of Meiklejohn’s (1932) arguments were centered around the need for students to be educated “directly through books” (p. 34). He further asserted that living together and social interaction must be arranged to foster a “closely-knit intellectual community” (p. 32) among students and faculty.

John Dewey (1938) continued the learning community philosophy by helping educators to think about education as not only reflective and academic but participatory. Dewey (1938) posited a system of education founded upon living experience. Dewey (1938) called for a recognition of the means in which experiences in individual lives lead to growth. Educators were expected to help students recognize and reflect on experiences in order to prepare them for subsequent experiences where deeper lessons could be learned (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1938) warned against learning subject matter in isolation because the learner would then segregate the knowledge from all experiences. John Dewey’s (1938) philosophy of experience was one of collateral learning where formation of enduring attitudes were more important than isolated lessons.

Tussman (1969), a pupil of Meiklejohn at the University of Wisconsin, designed the Experiment at Berkley to be reflective and academic, not merely participatory. Tussman (1969) built upon Meiklejohn’s concept of learning communities by taking individual classes and recreating a curricular plan of history, philosophy, English, and
other general education curriculum into a program for the first two years of college (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990). The research focused on the intellectual themes of reading, writing, lecturing, and discussions. Tussman’s program was short-lived, but today’s learning communities have their foundation in the *Experiment at Berkley* (Gabelnick, et al., 1990).

These learning communities facilitated collaboration among students, and this collaboration provided fuel for learning (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) stated that learning is not only influenced by the academic effort of students but also by their social and extracurricular activities outside the classroom. Since 2001, *U.S. News and World Report* has highlighted outstanding learning communities to spotlight new enhancements to learning (Morse, 2009). Learning communities were critical in making large universities more communal which helped students make connections to the university and in turn improved their learning opportunities (Meiklejohn, 1932; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

Employers expressed that college graduates lacked many necessary skills, which confirmed “knowledge matters more than ever” (The Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006, p. x). Peer influences were researched through the lens of inputs plus environment equals outcomes (Astin, 1993). Students (input) engaged with one another and encouraged to take initiative of their own learning (environment) have enhanced learning and retention (outcome) (Astin, 1993). Astin (1993) found that the peer group environment was a critical factor when looking at political identification, personality, attitudes, self-concept, social issues, behavior,
academic and cognitive development. Astin (1993) concluded students tend to change their thinking, interest, and values towards dominant peer groups. Since attainment and application of knowledge was critical for the work environment, higher education stakeholders needed to provide opportunities to enhance the learning environment (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

These peer influences are further utilized in the context of a mentoring relationship. As outlined, the concept of learning communities has existed since the early 20th century however, mentors have been around much longer. The concept of mentoring began near the end of the 8th century BC with Homer introducing a mentoring figure, aptly named “Mentor” into the Odyssey. The idea of mentoring allowed for a person with experience to provide support, direction, and feedback to a protégé (Schwiebert, 2000). There were three main functions of a mentor: (1) career, (2) psychosocial, and (3) role model (Schwiebert, 2000). Schwiebert (2000) further asserted that gender and cultural orientation impact how protégés interacts with their mentor and the degree to which each protégé utilizes the different functions of a mentor.

There are many different types of mentoring opportunities which include: (1) multiple mentoring, (2) mentoring partnerships, (3) paper mentors, (4) career cooperatives, and (5) peer mentoring. Peer mentoring allowed for a mentoring relationship to develop in the absence of supervision or direction from authoritative figures (Schwiebert, 2000). Not only did peer protégés benefit from the mentoring relationship but the peer mentors also benefited (Schwiebert, 2000).
Statement of the Problem

Lenning and Ebbers (1999) reported that “two primary challenges in higher education were to meet the public’s demand for maximizing students’ learning, and to be more accountable for what students learn” (p. 15). Six years before, Astin (1993) found that “the single most important environmental influence on student development is the peer group. By judicious and imaginative use of peer groups, any college or university can substantially strengthen its impact on student learning and personal development” (p. xiv). Additionally, Astin (1993) stated that a student’s peer group had the “strongest effect on retention” (p. 195). These challenges and influences meet and meld in the context of living-learning communities.

The emphasis on collaborative learning at the university level is a relatively new concept as opposed to the traditional view of learning which consisted solely of knowledge passed from expert to neophyte (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Residential living-learning communities provided living space for students and, moreover, created small group facilitation of academic and outside-of-the-classroom learning (Soldner & Szelényi, 2008). Certain staff members served as live-in facilitators and community members. More specifically, peer mentors were the most common type of student staff member within living-learning communities (Soldner & Szelényi, 2008). Peer mentors facilitated smaller discussions and created programs to contribute to learning (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Soldner, & Szelényi, 2008).

Peer mentors encompass a broad spectrum of student leaders and have been defined as resident assistants (Ballou & Brown, 1987), orientation ambassadors (Posner
& Rosenberger, 1997), student organization leaders, peer advisors (Rüssel, & Skinkle, 1990; Schmidt, Marks, & Derrico, 2004; Shapiro & Levine, 1999), and living-learning peer mentors (Soldner, & Szelényi, 2008). Researchers agreed the peer mentor role was important and these peer relationships were critical to the higher education learning environment (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Soldner & Szelényi, 2008). Outside the context of living-learning communities researchers have found benefits to peer mentors facilitating interaction (Ballou & Brown, 1987; Rüssel, & Skinkle, 1990; Schmidt, et al., 2004; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). At this time, there is a lack of research focused on peer mentors within living-learning communities.

Peer mentor roles within living-learning communities have been utilized by 97% of universities in the National Study of Living Learning Programs (Inkelas, Szelényi, Soldner, & Brower, 2007; Soldner, & Szelényi, 2008). The existing literature lacks studies on the effectiveness of peer mentors, perceptions of faculty or participants, or what value is added by peer mentors to living-learning communities. The lack of research on how peer mentors in living-learning communities enhance both the academic and extracurricular experiences coupled with the importance of the peer relationship in the learning environment provided the rationale for this study.

**Purpose and Significance of the Study**

This study sought to build upon the existing base of research regarding peer mentors and to provide both student affairs practitioners and higher education stakeholders with knowledge about the experiences of residents who interact with peer mentors within their living-learning communities. A better understanding of the
distinctive experiences of students who interact with peer mentors permits leaders in higher education to understand how student peers influence one another to create richer learning opportunities.

The qualitative research method of grounded theory as defined by Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) was conducted to understand the experiences of residents of a living-learning community and their relationships and interactions with the peer mentor. Grounded theory is designed to create a theory in relation to how individuals interact in a process in relation to some phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grounded theory was chosen because the researcher was interested “in eliciting participants’ understandings, perceptions and experiences of the world” (Payne, 2007, p. 70). Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated the researcher’s study should offer insight by enhancing understanding and providing a meaningful diagram that can led to action. The decision to use grounded theory began with the intent to listen to the participants’ stories of their experiences and interactions with the peer mentor by systematically gathering and analyzing these stories in order to provide a guide for action.

This study’s results potentially may signal to student affairs practitioners and higher education stakeholders the means to improve living-learning environments with the appropriate roles for a peer mentor in the community. The results of this study also provides insight into how to challenge and support peer mentors in a living-learning community to better impact student learning.
A primary research question and multiple guiding questions were developed to understand the experiences of living-learning participants. The primary research question is:

- What is the impact of the interaction between a peer mentor and residents within a living-learning community?

There are two additional research questions of:

- How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members academically?
- How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members socially?

**Theoretical Lens**

Two theories framed the theoretical lens that influenced the formulation of the research questions for this study, Greenleaf’s theory of servant leadership and Kohlberg’s theory of cognitive moral development. Both theories provide a foundation and insight for the researcher to draft and finalize the research questions for the study. Greenleaf’s (1996) servant leadership theory provides a lens of leadership about how humility plays an important role in building trust between leader and followers. Kohlberg’s (1981) cognitive moral development theory lays the groundwork to understand how people make decisions based on the principle of justice.

**Servant Leadership**

Greenleaf (1996) defined a servant leader as a person who wants to develop others. The individual chooses service first, then makes a conscious choice through time
to lead (Greenleaf, 1996; 1998). Servant leadership was defined as individuals who are genuine, whom people trust and want to follow, and whose first obligation was to others (Frick, 2004). Servant leadership starts with the individual, but it continues with the motivation to build a caring society where people want to and should be servants (Frick, 2004).

Servant leadership has been shorted from Greenleaf’s title of ‘the servant as leader’ (Greenleaf, 1998). The word leader in the former title is the application that should include service. Neither should service be left out of the definition. As Greenleaf (1998) stated, service is the moral dimension of the utmost importance. Greenleaf (1998) provided ten characteristics of the servant as leader that exemplify the core of servant leadership.

Greenleaf (1998) stated the first characteristic of servant leadership is listening. Servant leadership involved the concept of listening (Greenleaf, 1998). Listening to others to benefit the group and reflecting upon the ideas of others allows for a servant leader to grow (Greenleaf, 1998).

The second characteristic defined is empathy. Servant leaders must recognize and develop skills and talents within others (Frick, 2004; Greenleaf, 1998). When an individual can listen empathically and understand the gifts and abilities of another person, this person understands the heart of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1998).

Servant leadership incorporates the idea of restoration or healing (Greenleaf, 1998). An individual who is service minded can understand how one would want to incorporate peace in relationships, both individually and collectively with society. Frick
(2004) and Greenleaf (1998) described healing as not only confronting and making right conflict between individuals, but also in helping individuals resolve internal, personal emotional conflict.

Both general awareness and self-awareness are critical components of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1998). Making the commitment to be a servant leader can be intimidating because a person might not like what they uncover (Greenleaf, 1996; 1998). Awareness of self and surroundings allows an individual to make decisions which are intentionally grounded in a personal value system that also seeks to uphold community expectations (Greenleaf, 1998).

Persuasion rather than power is used in the decision making process of the servant leader (Greenleaf, 1998). The servant as a leader seeks to provide rational logical argument for a situation that is focused on the good of the community instead of hoarding or manipulating power over the decision making process (Greenleaf, 1998). Greenleaf (1998) stated one of the core principles of the servant leader is to build consensus.

Servant leaders conceptualized past day to day operations but also think about long term goals (Greenleaf, 1998). Conceptualization takes practice and requires discipline to balance short-term versus long term focus. Greenleaf (1998) stated servant leaders need to seek to nurture others’ capacity to “dream great dreams” (p. 6).

Greenleaf (1998) provided a seventh characteristic that is closely related to conceptualization which is foresight. Foresight was the ability to see the outcome of a situation (Greenleaf, 1998). These situations are hard to describe but easy to see.
Foresight was one of the most unexplored characteristics of leadership but deserved careful attention (Greenleaf, 1998).

Stewardship was taking care of something that is not one’s own (Greenleaf, 1998). Stewardship held up the good of society by committing to serve the needs of others instead of thinking of self or one’s company. Stewardship included being open and utilizing persuasion that builds trust instead of controlling power (Greenleaf, 1998).

A servant leader looks to develop people by committing to the growth of others (Greenleaf, 1998). Servant leaders understand that each individual person holds intrinsic value beyond what they give to the community. The servant leader knows it is their responsibility to nurture the individuals with whom they interact in all areas of life.

Finally, building community within the organization in which one works is the last characteristic of servant leadership listed. Greenleaf (1998) stated servant leaders understand the loss in community which occurs with a shift from local communities to large corporations. This lack of focus on community in the work place needs to be explored and community may be developed by the servant leader investing in the lives of community members (Greenleaf, 1996; 1998).

Servant leadership is not limited by the ten terms above. The key component to servant leadership is trust which comes from a servant leader being authentic, genuine and real in the relationships they develop in the community in which they serve. While the ten characteristics listed are possible to attain in a leadership context, a leader is not truly considered to be a servant leader if authenticity does not exist (Greenleaf, 1998).
Cognitive Moral Development

Lawrence Kohlberg (1981) conducted research on cognitive moral development, and his theory was influenced by Dewey and Piaget. Kohlberg (1981) focused on principles of justice rather than the principles of cooperation and fairness. Kohlberg’s philosophy of moral education was “designed to stimulate moral development rather than teach fixed moral rules” (Rich & DeVitis, 1985, p. 88). Kohlberg (1981) believed moral development was stimulated by higher level thinking and problem solving.

Kohlberg’s studies brought forth six developmental stages within three moral levels. The first moral level was Pre-conventional, (i) Stage One: Obey rules to avoid punishment (ii) Stage Two: Hedonistic orientation. The second moral level was Conventional, (iii) Stage Three: Conformity to avoid disapproval (iv) Stage Four: Abiding by the social order. The third moral level was Post-conventional,(v) Stage Five: Respect of other’s rights (vi) Stage Six: Altruism (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Kohlberg, 1981; Rich & DeVitis, 1985). Individuals in the pre-conventional level avoid punishment and try to gain rewards that will benefit themselves. Individuals in the conventional level try to win approval of those around them and conform to doing their duty so that they can maintain the expectations of the society. The post-conventional level is the hardest stage to enter in as there is an idea of thinking not only about yourself but respecting the rights of others where equality is actualized (Rich & DeVitis, 1985). These levels and stages were created to facilitate moral development instead of creating a list of fixed moral commandments (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Rich & DeVitis, 1985).
Kohlberg (1981) asserted the stages moved a person forward and each person went progressed through each stage. The stages also occur one at a time and come about in the same order even though a person might move through the stages at varying speeds (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Rich & DeVitis, 1985). Once a person has progressed to a higher stage, they may still make decisions through the lens of a lower stage of development, though they do so in the context of their current higher level stage (Kohlberg, 1981). Higher stages moved an individual closer to making moral decisions based on the principle of justice (Kohlberg, 1981). Cognitive development using moral judgment was encouraged through thinking and group interaction (Rich & DeVitis, 1985).

Servant leadership and cognitive moral development theory was used in this study as a beginning point to create research questions to understand the relationship between the peer mentor and the residents in the living-learning community. The researcher created questions with an interest in observing how the residents perceive their peer mentor. The cognitive moral development theory was used to also create research questions to help understand how students make decisions. These theories provided a lens to ask questions to understand how the community as a whole takes what they are learning inside and outside the classroom and combining the relationship with the peer mentor to see how decisions impact the community.
Overview of the Research Site

The community studied is a college-based living-learning community (LLC) at a large public institution of approximately 19,100 people. The LLC has been in existence for two-years. The living-learning community was founded because the Academic College, composed of disciplines of education, health and human services, felt there was a need to help students become human development specialists. The focus of the community was the majors housed in the Academic College. The learning community was designed to help students integrate and synthesize the knowledge they learn inside the classroom to their experiences and decisions outside the classroom.

The learning community was housed in a residence hall with a capacity of 135 students. The community comprised half of the second floor (female participants) and half of the third floor (male participants). The rest of the building housed non-living-learning members. There were 43 students participating in the learning community during the 2010-11 year with an approximate 50:50 male to female ratio.

The peer mentor in the community, a female, helped living-learning community members with school work, provided programs, and offered general guidance throughout the first year of school. The peer mentor’s typical day started at 5:30 am and ended around 11:00 pm because of clinicals she was involved in as well as her personal preference to start the day early. The peer mentor’s supervisor stated that the mentor worked hard to fulfill her duties and performed these duties with care. The research site provided an opportunity to observe and study interactions between the peer mentor and the residents in the living-learning community.
Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by the fact that qualitative data is not generalizable. The researcher’s interest is to gather a depth of information instead of broad types of data. The research site was at one institution and may not be descriptive of any other students’ perspectives on peer mentors or living learning communities. Additionally, all data was self-reported and the researcher assumed that participants honestly answered the interview questions. Also the researcher’s role as a student affairs professional at the research institution may confuse the boundaries of perceptions and could be perceived by participants as both administrator and researcher.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were used in this study:

1) Peer mentor: the student who lived in the residence hall and was paid by the academic college to serve as a resource, tutor, and mentor to the students of the learning community (Job Description, Inkelas, Szelényi, Soldner, & Brower, 2007; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Soldner, & Szelényi, 2008).

2) Servant Leadership: “authentic, ethical leaders, those whom we trust and want to follow, are servants first” (Frick, 2004, p. 5).

3) Grounded theory: “a theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pg. 12).

4) Symbolic interaction: “The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret or ‘define’ each other’s actions instead of merely reacting to each
other’s actions. Their ‘response’ is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions” (Blumer, 1969, pg. 19).

5) Living-Learning Community: “Programs in which undergraduate students live together in a discrete portion of a residence hall (or the entire hall) and participate in academic and/or extracurricular programming designed especially for them” (Soldner & Szelényi, 2008).

6) First-year Student: a student who was new to the university.

7) Resident: a person who was listed by University Housing as being an occupant of the rooms designated for the research living-learning community (Housing Contract).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the reader to the study. The early history and role of learning communities and peer mentors in the context of higher education were outlined. Peer mentors were identified as key constituents in learning communities yet the researcher did not find peer mentors of living-learning communities in the literature. The purpose of this study is to understand how the peer mentor impacts community relationships and residents’ development and learning. Servant leadership and moral development were introduced as the theoretical lens for the interview questions. An overview of the case was given, including a description of the research site. Finally, the researcher addressed limitations inherent to the study and provided a list of key terms and definitions central to this research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter two provides an overview of the foundations of living-learning communities. The second section describes the different types of learning communities. The next section describes in detail residential based learning communities which are living-learning communities. The fourth section provides the benefits of living-learning communities. The fifth section explains the peer mentor role within learning communities. The final section provides the theoretical framework which includes servant leadership and cognitive moral development.

Foundation of Living-Learning Communities

The desire to learn is the fuel for higher education and faculty and administrators have sought to ignite and fan this desire through many and varied methods and initiatives. Meiklejohn (1932) created learning communities by providing avenues for faculty and students to discuss what they had been reading in class. Meiklejohn (1932) understood the importance of providing opportunities for learning and being intentional about creating closely knit communities to discuss and synthesize information being learned. Meiklejohn (1932) was the first to suggest that living together in a learning community would create an environment where learning could be moved outside of the classroom.

John Dewey (1938) wrote about and researched experiential and cooperative learning. Dewey (1938) stated that learning in context of experience was so critical that other ways of learning could not even be considered learning. Dewey (1938) understood
the importance of individuality where learning in the context of past experiences needed to be taken into account, in order for individuals to make meaning. Dewey (1938) was purposeful about engaging each learner in open inquiry as opposed to a teacher-dominated curricula. Dewey’s (1938) thoughts can be summarized by,

> The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning. If impetus in this direction is weakened instead of being intensified, something much more than mere lack of preparation takes place. The pupil is actually robbed of native capacities which otherwise would enable him to cope with the circumstances that he meets in the course of his life. (p. 49)

Dewey further encouraged learning to take place outside the classroom and helped move away from the concept of memorization.

Tussman (1969), a protégé of John Meiklejohn, created a two year program which coupled learning with community where students and faculty engaged in reflection, discussion, and debate in the Experiment at Berkeley. Tussman (1969) posited that each lower level course should be viewed as a whole program instead of individual courses. Smith, et al. (2004) stated that faculty and students had to start thinking about education differently. The Experiment at Berkeley was an impetus to the development of learning communities today (Smith, et al., 2004).

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) stated that out of classroom learning also contributes to the success of students. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found that there was an indirect correlation between institutional size and students’ perceptions of satisfaction based on what relationships are promoted or discouraged at an institution. Tinto (1997) stated that colleges should be intentional by altering the classroom experience with learning communities to create collaborative learning opportunities.
because students responded they were more involved in academic and social activities on campus of a two year college. Student engagement has increased when an institution was intentional about providing opportunities to help students make small group connections through learning communities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Learning communities strengthened student-faculty interactions, student involvement with activities outside of the classroom, and most importantly peer influences and interactions (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Gabelnick, et al. (1990) noted that “all learning community models put learning in context that is larger, more extended, and more coherent than the typical array of classes” (p. 55). Learning communities created collaborative learning beyond the classroom into the everyday aspects of student’s lives (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Practitioners and scholars have begun to understand why it is important to know what learning communities are, as well as what makes them effective and successful (Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

Types of Learning Communities

Shapiro and Levine (1999) outlined four types of learning communities for strengthening the undergraduate educational experience. These models included: (a) cluster courses, (b) large cohort courses, (c) team-taught programs, and (d) residence based programs (Gabelnick, et al., 1990; Lenning, et al., 1999; Tinto, 2000). Every university has the flexibility to customize and upgrade their specific learning communities where the most benefit will be brought to the campus (Pike, 2008; Shapiro & Levine, 1999).
Cluster courses were the most basic where there are courses paired together to help students integrate learning between the courses (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). These courses typically combine interdisciplinary course work or seminar courses together for specific purposes which include: scientific discovery, math, literature, philosophy, or transition to college (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). Cluster courses are intentionally designed to provide a connection between courses and begin to help students create learning opportunities in groups of discussion to learn from one another.

Large cohort courses are often referred to as freshman interest groups (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). The interest groups are formed from a large lecture class by breaking the class into smaller subset learning groups. Typically there is a seminar or writing class that each interest group take together to reflect and discuss on what was learned in the larger lecture class. Peer leadership, members who took the class the year before, typically lead the discussion or tutor students in the class. Large cohort course learning communities try to take advantage of the different experiences from each individual by utilizing the peer relationship (Shapiro & Levine, 1999).

Team taught programs consisted of two or more courses that integrate the idea of interdisciplinary cooperation (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Most of the time the student’s whole schedule would consist of classes for the learning community (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith, et al., 2004). Class schedules are flexible where included field trips or lecture series were incorporated to help integrate learning through service or a coffee break (Shapiro & Levine, 1999).
Residence-based programs are the hardest learning communities to define (Shapiro & Levine, 1999). There is much debate of what makes up a residential or living-learning community. Smith (1993) stated that a residential learning community had to have a live-in faculty. Shapiro and Levine (1999) stated that residential learning communities need to be deliberate to go beyond a shared living environment. Smith, et al. (2004) stated that living-learning communities create opportunities to connect students with similar interest and did not need to have an academic connection. Living-learning communities do have one thing in common and that is learning and understanding not only happen in the classroom but also in extra-curricular avenues, specifically the living environment of residence halls (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Smith, et al., 2004).

Whichever one of the four types of learning communities was used, trust was a key component (Lenning, et al., 1999). A true community included characteristics such as inclusiveness, commitment, and consensus where differences were acknowledged and valued but not avoided or disregarded (Lenning, et al., 1999). Therefore, Lenning, et al. (1999) defined a learning community as an intentionally developed community that promotes and maximizes learning.

**Residential-Based Living-Learning Communities**

Residential-based programs or living-learning communities added an additional dimension to learning: the experience of participants living together in a university designated building, hall or area. (Inkelas, Soldner, Longerbeam, & Leondard, 2008; Lenning, et al., 1999; Shapiro & Levine, 1999). Using a two-step cluster analysis algorithm, Inkelas, et al. (2008) identified three types of living-learning communities: (a)
Small, Limited Resourced, Primarily Residential Life Emphasis, (b) Medium, Moderately Resourced, Student Affairs/Academic Affairs combination, and (c) Large, Comprehensively Resourced, Student Affairs/Academic Affairs Collaboration. Inkelas, et al. (2008) found no difference among these living-learning communities and how they help students learn. A result of this study was the creation of a common language which helped frame future studies of living-learning communities (Inkelas, et al., 2008).

Riker and Decoster (2008) stated that “students spend more time in their place of residence than in all other locations on campus combined, and the role of professional and student-staff members again becomes a prominent factor regarding the total educational process” (p. 82). The physical and interpersonal college student environments were critical to study. Learning happened out of the classroom, specifically in regard to where students lived (Riker & Decoster, 2008). Residents who felt respected in their residence hall living spaces perceived themselves as having less stress (Dusselier, Dunn, Yongyi, Shelley, & Whalen, 2005). Residents who stated they were able to study in their residence halls also perceived having less stress (Dusselier, et al., 2005). Riker and Decoster (2008) suggested the educational role in college residential settings focus on the physical environment, guidelines for the community, and opportunities for personal and interpersonal growth and development.

Soldner and Szelèneyi (2008) reprinted the National Study of Living Learning Programs (NSLLP) definition of living-learning programs as programs with a residential component which included participation in either an academic or extracurricular program. Nationally, a majority of living-learning programs were contained in one
residence hall floor of the double-loaded corridor design (Soldner & Szelényi, 2008). The NSLLP found that faculty involvement does not necessarily go hand-in-hand with the programmatic goals of the students (Soldner & Szelényi, 2008). Each learning community was also defined and influenced by the qualities and experiences of the participants (Pike, 2008).

**Benefits of Living-Learning Communities**

A whole civilization can be advanced by creating and building communities of learners (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). To create a community of learners, the University of Maryland created environments of active and reflexive learning (Stewart, 2008). Inkelas, Murphy, and Hummel (2006) found that participants who were active within living-learning communities perceived a strong sense of academic and social support. Within these communities, participants expressed a smooth transition to college and indicated satisfaction with their educational experience (Inkelas, et al., 2006; Lenning, et al., 1999; Smith, 2010).

Smith (2010) found that institutions of higher education provided a support system for students through the use of living-learning communities. Living-learning communities’ benefits for students included (a) higher academic achievement, (b) better retention rates, (c) greater satisfaction with college life, (d) improved quality of thinking and communicating, (e) a better understanding of self and others, and (f) a greater ability to bridge the gap between the academic and social worlds (Kowalski, 2004; La Vine & Mitchell, 2006; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999).
Fisher and Andrews (1976) posited that students who identified as a living-learning community participant expressed more satisfaction with their environment than the non-living-learning community participants located on the same floor. Pike (2008) found when environments were created to support learning opportunities and engagement with participants there was an increase in student success such as higher grades and persistence to the next year. Students who participated in a physical education living-learning community reported a strong connection to the profession they were pursuing (La Vine & Mitchell, 2006). Institutions need to understand the physical and social environments created within living-learning communities as they seek to add value to students’ educational experiences (Fisher & Andrews, 1976; Soldner & Szelényi, 2008; Smith, 2010).

**Peer Mentors**

In the National Study of Living-Learning Programs (NSLLP), peer mentorship was cited by 97 percent of institutions as the most frequently indicated undergraduate role within a living-learning community (Soldner, & Szelényi, 2008). Providing living-learning community participants with peers was a mechanism to enhance the learning experience (Kowalski, 2004). Peer relationships were the most important factors influencing students’ decision making (Astin, 1993; Riker & Decoster, 2008; Rüssel & Skinkle, 1990; Shapiro & Levine 1999). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) stated “the most influential peer interactions appear to be those that reinforce the ethos of the formal academic program and extend it into non-classroom settings” (pg. 121).
According to Rüssel and Skinkle (1990), students acknowledged they had more connection to the university after interacting with a peer mentor. Peer mentors’ helping skills, which included curiousness, inquisitiveness, open-mindedness, lack of prejudice, receptiveness, and impartial personality, provided participants an opportunity to rate these helping qualities as important characteristics of a peer mentor (Astin, 1993; Rüssel & Skinkle, 1990; Benjamin, 2007; Schmidt, Marks, & Derrico, 2004). Mentors signed up for the peer mentor program for reasons of helping, giving back to the community, or enhancing their skills set (Schmidt, Marks, & Derrico, 2004). Being available, planning events, serving as a resource, maintaining communication, and performing academic responsibilities were characteristics identified and wanted by participants from their peer mentors (Benjamin, 2007).

Benjamin (2007) also found, through a document analysis of job descriptions, common roles for peer mentors were: (a) being a resource; (b) meeting with supervisors; (c) working in conjunction with residence hall staff; (d) planning activities; (e) holding office hours; (f) assisting with college transition; and (g) team building. These peer mentors decided what to do as a peer mentor based on the job description (Benjamin, 2007). As time in the mentee relationship continued, mentors noticed more openness, enjoyment, involvement, and cooperation with their mentee (Schmidt, Marks, & Derrico, 2004). According to Benjamin (2007), peer mentors wanted to be resources, helpers, and empathic, they did not want to be overbearing with their students, and they wanted to help students make transitions and create connections with their institution. These peer mentor relationships developed within living-learning communities helped students get
more involved in student activities and learning outside of the classroom which helps participants make a connection to the university (Rüssel & Skinkle, 1990).

Astin (1993) stated peer relationships were the greatest influence on student’s decision making. In varied settings, leadership, social, classes, students were found to follow after what their peers thought about an issue. This peer influence thus creates a large community of influence which may be used positively in students’ lives. Since peer relationships were the biggest influence in students’ decisions making processes. Then it becomes critical for student development professionals to understand this relationship as they seek to put in place peer mentors who will positively impact student development and learning.

**Theoretical Lens**

**Servant Leadership**

In 1970, Greenleaf originated the concept of servant leadership. This concept was based on the belief that most people were born with the desire to serve others and provide for the common good (Cassel & Holt, 2008; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Alston, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1992). Over the last forty years, servant leadership has included characteristics such as listening, persuasion, foresight, commitment to people, and community building (Cassel & Holt, 2008; Neil, Haywood, & Peterson, 2007; Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Cassel and Holt (2008) and Sergiovanni (1992) concluded there was no more important component to servant leadership than trust. When trust was built into a servant leadership relationship, confidence increased and provided legitimacy to the servant leader (Sergiovanni, 1992).
Sergiovanni (1992) stated that “people’s confidence is strengthened by their belief that the leader makes judgments on the basis of competence and values, rather than self-interest” (p. 80). Servant leadership consists of components where the leader exhibits strong community awareness, a strong work ethic, legacy of service, and collaboration through relationships (Alston, 2005). Cassel and Holt (2008) and Neil, et. al. (2007) suggested how vital communication, relationships, and clarification of roles are as parts of community-building. Ethical and caring behavior was necessary in building productive and worthwhile relationships (Neil, et. al., 2007). For the leader to gain trust, which is the underlying theme of servant leadership, the leader must be competent and make decisions based on the values and standards of the common good as opposed to oneself.

Theoretical discussions on the concepts of a servant leadership framework served an important role in understanding the importance trust plays into relationships (Cassel & Holt, 2007; Alston, 2005). Cassel and Holt (2007) studied how governance boards created trust between themselves and their constituents. Alston (2005) investigated what motivated women to stay in positions of leadership in an education setting. Alston (2005) also wanted to understand what strategies women employed to overcome sexism, racism, and apathy. Both Cassel and Holt (2007) and Alston (2005) concluded qualities of servant leadership were indicative of the building of trust and ultimate survival of the situation studied. Cassel and Holt’s (2007) main assertion and implication for practice was concluding that trust is a key component of the servant leadership model.
Dugan, Komives, and Segar (2008) conducted a multi-institutional research study using a causal comparison design and multivariate analysis of variance on factors relating to positional leadership. Dugan, et. al. (2008) used multiple leadership theoretical frameworks to contribute to understanding leadership development needs of college students. College administrators and faculty should provide leadership development for their students’ learning development (Dugan, et. al., 2008). The study of how students scored on eight theoretical grounded measures of leadership showed how servant leadership characteristics being taught to college students impact leadership development (Dugan, et. al., 2008).

Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) used exploratory factor analysis and simple statistics to clarify the construct used to identify servant leadership. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) found the characteristics of altruistic calling, emotional healing, and organizational stewardship to be three top factors in analyzing servant leadership both conceptually and empirically.

Servant leadership can also contribute value to one’s experiences when studied through the lens of service learning (Neil, Hayward, & Peterson, 2007). Neil, et. al. (2007) used a multivariate analysis of variance on pre-tests and post-tests designed to measure student perceptions of inter-professional practice after going through a collaborative learning experience. Students’ interactions with faculty during a service learning experience provided an opportunity for skills, knowledge and dispositions to be exchanged between members. Also, this student-faculty interaction allowed the creation of an interpersonal environment where care was expressed and where individuals opened
up paths of communication (Neil, Hayward, & Peterson, 2007). Studies need to continue to explore how relationships, service learning, and drawing on past experiences can provide an opportunity to not only conceptualize servant leadership but actually apply servant leadership in daily practices.

**Cognitive Moral Development**

Thinking and learning is a biological process and because of this there was a need to create a thinking habit within students (Leamnson, 1999). College students think when entering the college environment they will not deal with the real world and this limitation gives them false views of consequences or personal responsibility (Leamnson, 1999). Students do not learn what faculty and staff tell them but students learn what they do and experience (Leamnson, 1999).

Colby and Kohlberg (1987) stated moral judgment is about how a person refers to the concept of right. Moral judgments are based on values and people that prescribe to normative rights and responsibilities rather than preference (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). Therefore, the dogmatic nature of moral judgment calls for individuals to take some action (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). Colby and Kohlberg (1987) stated justice to be the cornerstone of understanding moral development and justice is understanding what is right, wrong, good, bad, and morally obligatory.

Kohlberg postulated three levels of moral development that provide a point of view which the individual engenders moral judgments (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). These levels include: (1) preconventional, (2) conventional, and (3) postconventional, and they provided a general organization that give light to understanding moral judgement (Colby
& Kohlberg, 1987). Within each level, two stages exist that helps one understand how the levels progress.

Heteronomous morality, stage 1, states individuals have an egocentric point of view where their focus is not on others. An individual in this stage does not recognize that there is a difference between them and others (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). Colby and Kohlberg (1987) stated a person avoids disobeying the law because the individual wants to avoid the punishment.

Colby and Kohlberg (1987) stated individualism, stage 2, claims individuals are aware that each individual has rights to pursue their own perspective and that the individual right is relative to the perspective on the individual. Individuals in this stage do right because they are trying to serve their own needs, but they understand each individual has their own interest as well (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

Colby and Kohlberg (1987) posited that mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal conformity, stage 3, is where individuals begin to understand how they have relationships with other individuals. The individual starts to be aware of shared feelings and others interest because a priority over individual interests (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). There is a belief in the golden rule, and the focus is being a good person in the eyes of the individual as well as others (Colby and Kohlberg, 1987).

Colby and Kohlberg (1987) provided social system and conscience, stage 4, to show how individuals differentiate between community perspectives and individual motives. The individual espouses the view of the system that defines roles and rules.
The individuals do right to avoid the pit fall of the system collapsing (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

Colby and Kohlberg (1987) stated social contract as stage 5 which included the individual is aware of individual values and rights before having social involvement. There is an understanding of a contractual agreement or obligation to the law because of one’s social agreements which include the protection of all people’s rights (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

The universal ethical principle, stage 6, states individuals recognize the nature of morality and people are to be treated as equals (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987). Individuals do right because there is a belief as a rational person in the power of universal moral principles and personal commitment to those principles (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).

Gibbs, Lieberman, and Kohlberg (1983) conducted a longitudinal study of United States males that used correlation of individual characteristics to moral judgment. Individuals were found to have relative movement from stage to stage. If a person was more advanced in stage one then they are more likely to be advanced in the stages beyond as well (Gibbs, et al., 1983). An individual social status did not extend beyond stage 3, however, it was noted that peer group influences impacted an individual’s moral judgment maturity (Gibbs, et al., 1983). There was found a moderate relationship between education and moral judgment. None of the subjects reached stage four without having attended some college, and none reached the fifth stage without having completed college (Gibbs, et al., 1983).
Nisan and Kohlberg (1982) studied the moral judgment in Turkish males. The purpose of this longitudinal study was to examine the claim that universal structure in moral reasoning existed across cultures. The study found that the stage sequence is the same across cultures. Also in this study was the finding that the village subjects did not show any signs of development beyond stage 3 (Nisan & Kohlberg, 1983).

Similarly, Snarey, Reimer, and Kohlberg (1984) studied longitudinally on the development of moral reasoning among kibbutz adolescents. This study stated that the progression through the stages in sequential order still happened with the kibbutz adolescents (Snarey, et al., 1984). Snarey, et al. (1984) used a regression model and found that age is correlated to the moral stage in which a person is identified. Snarey, et al. (1984) concluded that the findings of cross-cultural analysis were still the same but noted that cultural context is important to understand moral judgments.

The following table illustrates how the research questions correlate to these theories.
Table 1. Research Question/Theoretical Lens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Theoretical Lens</th>
<th>Application of Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the impact of the interaction between a peer mentor and residents within a living-learning community?</td>
<td>Servant Leadership</td>
<td>Servant leaders tend to build trust within a community and seek the good of the community above themselves. It is supposed that a peer mentor who exhibits qualities of servant leadership will be perceived both as a servant and a trustworthy leader by the community members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members academically?</td>
<td>Kohlberg’s Moral Development</td>
<td>Students who are challenged at a stage higher than where they currently are, both inside and outside the classroom, will be able to make decisions that take into account both themselves and others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members socially?</td>
<td>Kohlberg’s Moral Development</td>
<td>Just as students are challenged in relation to their academics and decision-making process, they may also be challenged in the social decisions they make.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 focused on the foundations and different types of learning communities to show the historical place these communities have in the academic realm. Residential learning communities, better known as living-learning communities, were described.

Benefits of learning communities were shown through the National Study of Living Learning Programs which has been conducted over the last eight to ten years. The impact of the environment, community members, and coalescing of information inside and outside the classroom has created close knit learning communities.

One of the key factors of learning communities are the rich opportunities for students to not only interact with faculty but also with their peers. One element not
researched is the role of the peer mentor in living-learning communities. Peer mentors have the opportunity to interact with students within the living-learning community more than any other individual. The lack of information on the importance and nature of this role is why this topic was chosen.

The theories of servant leadership and moral development were outlined to provide a lens and basis for the research questions for the study. Examples were provided from both theories to demonstrate characteristics of each and the theories were applied to the research questions.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study was designed to better understand the interaction and by-product of this interaction between a peer mentor and residents in a living-learning community in a college comprised of education, parks, recreation and tourism management, nursing, and public health sciences majors at a large (approximately 19,000), four-year public land-grant institution in the southeastern United States. Primarily this study sought to portray how this peer-mentor/resident interaction impacts the academic and social decision making of the residents. The secondary purpose of the study was to gather information which will help residents improve their learning experience and help faculty/staff bolster these experiences. This chapter gives an explanation for the research design which includes research questions, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was selected for this study. The reason for choosing a qualitative study was a depth of knowledge was needed about the impact the peer mentor had on the living-learning community because of the limited research on the peer mentor role (Glesne, 2006). Listening to the stories of others was the essence of qualitative research methods (Glesne, 2006). The researcher needs to make sense of people’s stories and how the stories intersect with one another (Glesne, 2006; Stake, 1995). Qualitative research describes the experiences of people with whom the
researcher has interacted or been influenced by in order to provide a new perspective to the literature (Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2006; Patton, 1980; Stake, 1995). The researcher sought to explore the stories of residents and their peer mentor and observed the common threads among these stories to better understand how the peer mentor/resident relationship contributed to learning (Creswell, 2003). Glesne (2006) concluded qualitative research is designed to understand social phenomena from the context of participants involved. This study sought to do that, as the role of the peer mentor was understood through the context of residents’ interactions with their peer mentor.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined grounded theory as a “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (pg. 12). Payne (2007) stated researchers may use grounded theory when there is an interest “in eliciting participants’ understandings, perceptions and experiences of the world” (pg. 70). Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated the researcher’s study should offer insight by enhancing understanding and providing a meaningful sign to action. The decision to use grounded theory in this research began with the intent to listen to the participants’ stories of their experiences and interactions with the peer mentor by systematically gathering and analyzing these stories to provide a guide for action.

Grounded theory involves going into the field to discover data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The discovery of data includes complexity and variability of both phenomena and human interaction (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, flexibility and openness are important components to grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The meanings of the data are not easily understood or even taken for granted (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).
The decision to use a grounded theory design also was of interest for discovering the complex interaction between the peer mentor and the living-learning community residents so that the researcher could be flexible and open while being systematic when analyzing the data.

Symbolic interaction is a characteristic of grounded theory. It develops how individuals within an environment uniquely interact with others in that environment based on their personal past actions and on the actions of others (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). If one person, time, or other aspect of environment changes, it affects the interactions of the others involved in the system in question (McCall & Becker, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher recognized this foundation of grounded theory as critical to this study because it gives credence to the idea that residents’ interactions with their peer mentor and their environment are intrinsically linked to the actions and decisions they make (McCall & Becker, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1998) further assert that meaning is defined and redefined through interaction. The researcher should be aware of interrelationships among conditions, action, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

There were two other characteristics of grounded theory that provided rationale for the methodology of this study: (a) constant-comparative data collection and (b) theoretical sampling (Cresswell, 2003; Lichtman, 2006). Constant-comparative data collection allows the researcher to compare the data from one interview to another interview (Lichtman, 2006). Theoretical sampling strengthens this study by permitting
the researcher to intentionally explore other rich data in documents and observations by comparing the concepts being explored in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded theory is a fitting methodology for researching the peer mentor relationship with living-learning community residents because it allows for the depth of interaction that occurs in such relationships while at the same time allowing for the breadth of insight provided by many participants in a community. No research has been found regarding interactions of peer mentors and residents in a living-learning community which will allow the researcher to add to the body of literature on living-learning communities.

**Site Selection**

The research site is classified by the Carnegie Foundation (n.d.) as a primarily residential, large (approximately 19,000), public, four-year research, land grant institution in the Southeast. The university is comprised of five academic colleges. The academic college comprised of education, parks, recreation and tourism management, nursing, and public health sciences majors living-learning community which has one peer mentor was the community selected for this study.

This academic college created the living-learning community of their majors two years ago to incorporate classroom academics with the extracurricular involvement of students. The goals of the academic college are listed in six dispositions. The academic college sought to incorporate these goals in the living-learning community to help students espouse the meaning of being a “human development specialist”. These dispositions include: (1) working collaboratively with diverse individuals, (2) being
leaders who create change, (3) demonstrating strong and compassionate ethics, (4) understanding organizations and systems, (5) being learners throughout life, and (6) succeeding with global understanding. Programs and activities were created and implemented in order to create a more intentional learning environment. The housing department and the college collaborated in their efforts to bring resources together to make the experience more enriched than a typical residence hall experience. This collaboration has been a crucial component to the design and implementation of this living-learning community.

The community members live in a 135 person residence hall on two different floors. The females live on half of the 2nd floor while the males live on half of the 3rd floor. The rest of the second and third floors along with the fourth floor are comprised of non-living learning members. The residence hall composition provides a unique opportunity for residents to learn to live with people who may have different values, standards, and expectations. The residents live in a traditional style residence hall where two students live in a room and share a bathroom with 20 other people. The building has one room for studying with movable table and chairs. Also, in this room, there is a large screen television and couches for socialization. This environment has been observed by the researcher as a room that is used for both purposes all hours of the day. The sense of community in the building revolves around this room as there is no other place like it in the building.

The peer mentor position (see Appendix H - Peer Advisor Job Description) was created to provide a live-in role model for the students. The peer mentor’s position is
designed to be a liaison between the students and the college. Unlike the resident assistant, the peer mentor does not have a main priority of enforcing policy. This difference allows for the peer mentor to speak candidly and openly with the residents about successes and struggles.

**Characteristics of the Population & Site Selection**

The population size of the living-learning community studied was 43 residents. From this population, 14 participants, the peer mentor, the resident director, and the academic coordinator for the living-learning community were interviewed. Participants were residents from the academic college that had education, parks, recreation and tourism management, nursing, and public health sciences majors living-learning community, and they were 18 years old. There are two exceptions: (1) one participant was not in the aforementioned majors but living on the side of the hall with the living-learning community, and (2) one participant changed majors halfway through the year.

The university housing department provided access to the residence hall and provided a listing of students residing in rooms designated for the living-learning community. The academic administrator overseeing the living-learning community also provided lists of names of students in the community. These lists were checked to confirm students participating in the living-learning community. The researcher drafted an email invitation which was sent to the living-learning residents from the academic administrator in the community inviting them to participate in the study. Students who responded to the email, agreeing to participate in the interview process completed a profile sheet (see Appendix D – Participant Profile Sheet) before proceeding with
interviews. The researcher contacted interested students to decide on a convenient interview time and interviews were slated for one hour each. Interviews were completed in a conference room or office located on the first floor of the residence hall in which the living-learning community is located. Interview questions are located in Appendix B – Interview Questions. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Before the interviews, participants gave voluntary consent to participation by reading a consent form and proceeding with the interview (See Appendix E – Consent Form). Because of the nature of the information, the students did not sign the consent form. Each participant was assigned a participant number when they filled out a participant profile sheet (see Appendix D – Participant Profile Sheet). Therefore, the number assigned to the participant was the only identifier of the participant. The researcher kept participant information forms secured in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality.

Role of Researcher

The researcher has been an employee in residential life programs for ten years and has served in the roles of Resident Assistant, Graduate Resident Director, Complex Director, and Area Coordinator. As a Resident Assistant, the researcher lived and worked in a first-year experience living-learning community with an academic component at a different site. As a Complex Director, the researcher created a living-learning community focused on men’s advocacy issues at a different site. As an Area Coordinator, the researcher worked with the living-learning community for this research study. In this position, the researcher served as the residential life liaison to the college
administrators creating the community. The researcher’s experience in higher education as a practitioner who has worked with living-learning communities in the past is a form of bias in this research. From a positive standpoint, this bias gave the researcher an inside perspective and understanding of living-learning communities which contributed to greater insight throughout the research process. The researcher’s living-learning experience also created a challenge that the researcher was cognizant of looking beyond his past experiences and was willing to accept any new information or perceptions which the research uncovered.

At the point before the interviews began, the researcher moved into a position in the Student Conduct Office. This new job created distance, both literally and figuratively, as the research moved out of the building and engaged in different work functions. The researcher had to make more of an effort to visit the living-learning community. The researcher had no contact with the participants in the new student conduct role. An additional challenge was the living-learning community members had already created bonds, and the researcher attempted to immerse himself into this already formed group.

Finally, the researcher had novice research experience with qualitative research. The researcher was intentional about learning grounded theory of data collection and data analysis and used a committee member who is an expert with grounded theory to peer debrief.
The researcher went through the approval process for the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research site’s IRB approved this study which can be seen in Appendix A – Research Site’s IRB Approval.

**Research Questions**

A primary research question and multiple guiding questions have been developed to understand the experiences of living-learning participants. The primary research question is:

- What is the impact of the interaction between a peer mentor and residents within a living-learning community?

There are two additional research questions of:

- How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members academically?
- How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members socially?

Greenleaf’s (1970) theory of servant leadership and Kohlberg’s (1981) theory of moral development serve as the theoretical lens for the development of the research study questions and interview questions as indicated in Table 1 - Research Question/Theoretical Lens located in Chapter 2.

**Data Collection**

Lyons and Coyle (2007) highlighted the four methods of qualitative data collection: (a) language, (b) observations of behaviours, (c) images, and (d) artefacts. They articulated that the first two are the most prevalent in grounded theory because of
the reliance grounded theory places on “data that are or can be transformed into text” (pg. 72). Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated the researcher should take with “great seriousness the words and actions of the people studied” (pg. 6). The researcher used interviews, direct observations, and documentation to gather information about the relationships and to draw meaningful conclusions for the readers.

**Interviews**

The researcher purposefully selected the participants and site to best help to understand the problem (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Smith and Eatough (2007) challenged qualitative researchers to view participants as “experiential experts” and encourage researchers to allow opportunity for participants to tell their own individual special stories through the use of semi-structured interviews (pg. 42). The researcher sought to balance this conception of the participant as the expert with the acceptance that the researcher was the filter through which all information is passed and processed (Lichtman, 2006). Since interviews were the major data collection tool, and the researcher was intentional about using prior interview information to seek clarification in later interviews by member checking as a validation strategy (Creswell, 2009).

This study used semi-structured or guided interviews to serve as the principal technique for data collection (Creswell, 2003; 2009; Lichtman, 2006). Fifteen student participants, including the peer mentor, and two administrators of the living-learning community were interviewed once each using a semi-structured interview protocol.
Interviews were conducted in person in a one-on-one setting. The interviews took place in an office in the living-learning community building. Interviews were audio recorded.

Creswell (2009) stated interviews should utilize open-ended questions in a generally unstructured manner to allow for the individual stories to be told. The researcher created the list of interview questions from the literature review, and they were pilot tested in a qualitative class (See Appendix B –Interview Questions). The questions were created for the purpose of understanding each individual experience as a whole (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 1987). The transcriptions of the interviews were loaded into Nvivo™ qualitative research software (QSR International, n.d.) to create the database and to manage the audit trail.

**Documentation**

Document information is likely to be germane to grounded theory research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher was given documents from the living-learning community administrator which included: (a) student advisory meeting minutes, (b) peer mentor position description, (c) peer mentor training manual, and (d) community member expectations. Documentation allows the researcher, in conjunction with interviews and direct observation, to triangulate data to accomplish theoretical sampling (Creswell, 2003; 2009). The researcher used the documentation within the audit trail through the analysis process (Glesne, 2006).

**Observation**

Corbin and Strauss (2008) challenged the researcher to immerse themselves in the environment being studied to understand the complexity and variability of the
phenomenon of human interaction. As an additional method of gaining insight and information regarding the interactions between living-learning community members and the peer mentor the researcher chose to complete several observations of the community. The researcher made site visits during the times of interviews and for some living-learning community activities. The prime areas of observation were: (a) the residence hall environment, (b) the residents and the peer mentor, and (c) programs and activities facilitated by the living-learning community. The researcher’s reflections on the observations were recorded before, during, and after the observation occurred in the form of field notes. Some benefits of including these observations in the study were: (a) the researcher had firsthand experience with participants, (b) unusual aspects of relationships could be observed, and (c) it allowed for topics to arise that might be uncomfortable for participants to discuss (Cresswell, 2003). The researcher took variety of roles within the activities observed which allowed for the researcher to understand the participants’ reality from a member of the community perspective. The researcher used participant observation to take an active role in listening to the experiences of the residents (Glesne, 2006).

Analysis of Data

Creswell (2009) purported data analysis involves “making sense” out of text and data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) asserted that data analysis “requires immersion in the data” (pg. 42). Therefore, data analysis in this study happened concurrently with the data collection and was an ongoing process (Glesne, 2006; Creswell, 2003; 2009; Patton, 1987; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
In the context of grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1998) encouraged qualitative researchers to go beyond typical methods to reach new conclusions regarding interactions. To accurately depict what participants have said and done in the course of the study, Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated the researcher should acquire different perspectives of the experiences of the participants. One way to validate these differing perspectives is through triangulation of information from the interviews of multiple participants. Grounded theory data analysis involves interpretation that is ordered and systematic in nature, the researcher achieved this through constant-comparative data collection during the coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**Coding**

A thematic analysis was used and is defined as “a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description” (Glesne, 2006, p. 147). The detail analysis of this study began with this thematic coding process (Creswell, 2009). Glesne (2006) asserted a qualitative researcher should use coding to help formulate and understand the data being collected. Coding is used to help the researcher bring focus to the chaos of mass data (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 1987).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined a systematic approach to the coding process for grounded theory. The process includes four different forms of coding: (a) microanalysis, (b) open coding, (c) axial coding, and (d) selective coding. Throughout the coding process, microanalysis was used by the researcher to immerse himself in the data. Microanalysis entailed the researcher examining page by page, paragraph by paragraph,
sentence by sentence, word by word, to interpret and understand the meaning in participants’ stories. These in-depth comparisons allowed the researcher to recognize when the data began to reach saturation (Creswell, 2009).

**Open Coding**

Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined open coding as “data broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared for similarities and differences” (pg. 102). As the researcher engaged in the open coding process and these parallel ideas emerged the researcher grouped relevant concepts into categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Within grounded theory open coding is considered the primary process; however, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) confirmed axial coding can happen simultaneously.

**Axial Coding**

Axial coding was defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as “the process of relating categories to their sub-categories” (pg. 123). The researcher undertook this process concurrently with open coding and grouped similar ideas into sub-categories which helped to further define the initial categories. This allowed the researcher to be systematic as he sought to genuinely understand and interpret participants’ stories.

**Selective Coding**

Strauss and Corbin (1998) identified selective coding as “the process of integrating and refining categories” (pg. 143). Once general categories and subcategories were defined, the researcher sought to further compare and contrast these categories in order to explain and interpret the voices of participants. As Strauss and
Corbin (1998) asserted, this selective coding process is ongoing and only reaches a conclusion in the final analysis and writing of results.

**Chapter Summary**

The third chapter explained and justified the qualitative approach and grounded theory research design. A detailed description of the living-learning community was provided so the reader can understand the real-life context being studied. The primary research question and research sub questions were provided. The role of the researcher was denoted and the researcher’s biases were stated. Finally, the researcher described the data collection and data analysis components of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter four is the explanation of the data analysis process which included a discussion about the participants, how the interviews were conducted, and then how the researcher created the grounded theory. The researcher discussed the coding process as well as how the data was stored. A narrative explanation is used to describe and discuss the three major categories that emerged from the data which were: (1) characteristics of the peer mentor, (2) environment of the living-learning community, and (3) decision making of community members. The chapter concluded with an answer to the research question and implications of the resident and peer mentor interactions socially and academically.

Participant Demographics

Fourteen students participated in this study. These participants met the following criteria: (a) they were residents of the living-learning community and (b) were first-year students at the university. Additionally, the peer mentor of the community participated.

Four participants self-identified as male, and ten participants self-identified as female. Eight participants self-identified as being eighteen years old, and six participants self-identified as being nineteen years old. Thirteen participants self-identified as White, and one participant self-identified as Black.

Thirteen participants self-identified as a freshmen and one participant self-identified as a sophomore. The participant who self-identified as a sophomore was a
first-year student new to the university. This was the reason the researcher included this participant. Five participants self-identified as nursing majors. Two participants self-identified as PRTM/professional golf management majors. Two participants self-identified as health science majors. One participant self-identified as PRTM/travel and tourism management major. One participant self-identified as a special education major. One participant self-identified as an early childhood education major. One participant self-identified as a former health science major now pursuing the psychology major. One participant self-identified as a Spanish and international health major. The range of the participant grade point ratios (GPR) was from 3.0 to 4.0 with an average GPR of 3.59. The following are the specific answers from the Appendix D – Participant Profile Sheet for each participant.

Student 1, a nursing major with a self-reported GPR of 4.0, self-identified as an 18 year old White male.

Student 2, a nursing major with a self-reported GPR of 3.8, self-identified as a 19 year old White female.

Student 3, a PRTM/travel and tourism major with a self-reported GPR of 3.8, self-identified as an 18 year old White female.

Student 4, a PRTM/professional golf management major with a self-reported GPR of 3.94, self-identified as an 18 year old White male.

Student 5, a Spanish and international health major with a self-reported GPR of 3.0, self-identified as a 19 year old White female. Student 5 is living on the LLC side of the hall but is not a member of the LLC because of her major.
Student 6, a nursing major with a self-reported GPR of 3.56, self-identified as a 19 year old Black female.

Student 7, a special education major with a self-reported GPR of 3.23, self-identified as an 18 year old White female.

Student 8, a PRTM/professional golf management major with a self-reported GPR of 3.1, self-identified as a 19 year old White male.

Student 9, a nursing major with a self-reported GPR of 3.76, self-identified as an 18 year old White female.

Student 10, a nursing major with a self-reported GPR of 3.3, self-identified as a 19 year old White female.

Student 11, a psychology major with a self-reported GPR of 4.0, self-identified as a 19 year old White female. Student 11 switched from the Health Science major halfway through the academic year.

Student 12, an early childhood education major with a self-reported GPR of 3.0, self-identified as a 19 year old White female.

Student 13, a health science major with a self-reported GPR of 4.0, self-identified as a 18 year old White male.

Student 14, a health science major with a self-reported GPR of 3.7, self-identified as a 18 year old White female.
Table 2. Participant Demographics Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years of age</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 years of age</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing majors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Golf Management majors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Science majors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel and Tourism Management major</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education majors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish and International Health major</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPR Range</td>
<td>3.0 – 4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the fourteen participants, two administrative staff members and the peer mentor were selected to be interviewed. The staff members were selected because of their involvement with the living-learning community. The peer mentor was selected to understand what her role and interactions were with the living-learning community. “Catherine”, a pseudonym for the peer mentor, was assigned to the participant and utilized in the qualitative narrative. The reason for the pseudonym being used is the fact that the peer mentor was a person and the participants did not refer to her by her title but by her name. One administrative staff member was responsible for the day to day operations of the living-learning community. The other administrative staff member was
selected because she provided supervision of the housing staff within the living-learning community.

**Interview Information**

The researcher identified fourteen students to interview, two staff members, and the peer mentor of the community. Interviews lasted from approximately 9 to 38 minutes. A second interview was conducted with three of the participants. The mean interview length of each interview was approximately 16 minutes. During the first interviews, the researcher asked the following questions using a semi-structured interview protocol:

1. **What has been your most significant experience this year in your living-learning community?**
2. **What is the purpose of the Peer Mentor?**
   2.a. How would you describe your Peer Mentor to a student who is new to the living-learning community? What are the characteristics you would use to describe your peer mentor?
   2.b. How would you characterize your relationship with your peer mentor?
   2.c. Provide a specific example of a positive interaction with your peer mentor.
   2.d. Provide a specific example of a negative interaction with your peer mentor.
3. **How do the living-learning community members perceive Peer Mentors?**
4. **In what ways do peer mentors affect the academic performance of community members?**
5. In what ways do peer mentors affect the social development of community members?

6. How do peer mentors facilitate faculty-student interactions within the living-learning community?

7. How do peer mentors facilitate peer interactions within the living-learning community?

8. Who are the unofficial peer mentors of the community?

9. What are the core concepts of the HEHD LLC?

The interviews were conducted face-to-face in the residence hall where the living-learning community was located. All interviews were digitally recorded with Audacity®, software for recording sound. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher after the interview was completed. The transcriptions were loaded into Nvivo9™ qualitative research software (QSR International, n.d.) to create the study database and to manage the audit trail.

**Field Notes**

Field notes were created and reviewed by the researcher. The researcher created field notes during individual interviews, times of observing the community during activities or programs, and when the researcher was a participant in an event with the students. Each set of field notes included observed behaviors of tone or body language of participants, thoughts of researcher, and ideas to follow-up with participants. The field notes were used to include in the audit trail and to help understand the themes of the story.
of the participants. The field notes were transcribed and stored in Nvivo9™ qualitative research software (QSR International, n.d.).

**Memoing**

The researcher collected and combined the thoughts and emerging categories and concepts together. The researcher was able to think and make connections between the emerging themes. Glesne (2006) stated memoing is the opportunity for the researcher to reflect, think, and interpret the data. Memoing contributed to the data analysis procedure that provided a way for the researcher to interpret the stories of the participants. The memos were transcribed and stored in Nvivo9™ qualitative research software (QSR International, n.d.).

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis happened concurrently with data collection. Constant comparison was used by the researcher to compare interviews, documents, and observations by analyzing for similarities and differences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The cornerstone to grounded theory is searching the data for concepts or themes through analytic coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher used four different coding methods: (1) microanalysis, (2) open coding, (3) axial coding, and (4) selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The open coding process included breaking the data down to the most basic level word by word, and then piecing the data back together from within and between each interview. Finally, the concepts and categories were integrated into an explanation of the stories being told by the participants.
The coding process gave the researcher a systematic process to interpret and explain the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Lichtman, 2006).

**Microanalysis**

Microanalysis was used at the beginning of the study as a detailed process to open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Microanalysis was used to help generate ideas about the data to begin to form initial concepts. Microanalysis was used to inspect the data up close and break the data into free nodes. The researcher analyzed the data word-by-word and line-by-line. During the microanalysis coding which was used during open and axial coding, 555 free nodes were identified through using Nvivo9™ qualitative research software (QSR International, n.d.). These free nodes represented the data in the broken down words of the participants. The microanalysis process allowed for concepts to be refined along with the similarities and differences to be understood. See Table 3 for the microanalysis process.
Table 3. Example of the Microanalysis Process

Excerpt from Participant 3's interview:
"I am close to her because she lives like right down the hall, so I am close to her. Uh, She I I like I like the first week of school like got the I am 8 ½ hours away from home and I was just like like made me like kinda be like wait I am now 8 ½ hours away and my parents aren’t here and like she like took so much time out of her like schedule and she was so busy with her classes to like check on me everyday and just be like so you know what happened today. Did you talk to your mom? Like to make it easier so like that brought us really close and now she knows she will pop into my room and we’ll talk about like my life and then her life and what is going on with like her sister and uh she seems like that because we had that first week of bonding. She doesn’t seem like someone distant that’s just there to like I don’t know like sometimes your professors and like people in HEHD like they seem like distant because like I had that personal level built with her right away she’s like I consider her like a friend."

Initial coding from this excerpt:
- "Close to her" (free node)
- "First week of school" (free node)
- "Took time out of schedule" (free node)
- "Check on me" (free node)*
- "Pop into room" (free node)
- "Bonding" (free node)
- "Not distant" (free node)
- "Personal friend" (free node)

Final Coding from this excerpt: | Rational through microanalysis:
---|---
"Close to peer mentor" (free node) | "Close to peer mentor" replaced "Close to her" as other participants mentioned her in reference to the peer mentor and their relationship. So I changed her to peer mentor for clarity. Also, "Not distant" was combined with this free node as well.

"Beginning of the year" (free node) | "Beginning of the year" replaced "first week of school" because participants following referred to the first several weeks as the beginning of the school year. First week implied the peer mentor only helped in the first week but other participants used a general time frame of transitions in the beginning.
"There for you" (free node)  
"There for you" replaced "took time out of schedule" because in following interviews participants gave examples of how the peer mentor was there for them. Took time out of schedule is one of the ways the peer mentor was there for the residents.

"Visits room" (free node)  
"Visits room" replaced "Pop into room" because other participants stated how the peer mentor would drop by rooms to say hello.

"Relationships"  
"Relationships" replaced both "bonding" and "personal friend" as a free node. There were several different types of relationships mentioned and bonding and personal friend was placed in this concept.

*"Check on me" was abandoned because after analyzing the interpretation the researcher does not agree with the implications

*Free node was abandoned after initial analysis.

**Open Coding**

The researcher broke the raw data down paragraph-by-paragraph and line-by-line to observe initial concepts. This process included using the microanalysis to group similar topics into concepts. These new concepts were observed through the lens of constant comparative analysis where the concepts were grouped into similar attributes and shared meaning. See Table 4 for initial concepts.
### Table 4. Initial Concept Examples from Raw Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Concept</th>
<th>Raw Data from Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Performance</strong></td>
<td>&quot;I just figured that I mean it’s a one hour class it’s not like a huge commitment you don’t have to like dedicate like hours of time too it. It’s just something that you can do and I feel like it will it will help me in my major cause I’m a health science major, so if if you deal if you deal with that then if you deal with like health on campus then that’s sort of like exactly what I’m going to be doing and and for the rest of my four years and just like seeing how that is affects on campus is just a good reflection so I guess that’s kind of why. And yeah it’s a big help.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;She is always there to make sure we’re having a good day. I, I mean, let’s see academic performance. I mean I have never gone to her for any academic help or anything. I am always kinda a very independent person. Um, when it comes to my studies. Um, but I am sure if you needed anything she would probably be one of the first people to go to in this building.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;She helped me a lot with um, scheduling especially. And I had planned on studying abroad when I talked with her last and she helped me in umm, just letting me know what I needed to do in order to make that happen. ‘Cause for a nursing major especially um we have very specific requirements for courses that we have to fulfill and so like it is a very small window of opportunity that we have to do that. So she was helpful to help me figure that out.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
<td>&quot;She just like looks into into like what you what you want. And she cares about like how you’re doing. And she’ll check up on you and stuff and she she just wants you to have the best experience that you that you can have. And try to make it like as flawless as possible.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>of Peer Mentor</strong></td>
<td>&quot;She’s definitely a good role model because I know that she is involved in a lot with the college. And she seems very hardworking with her nursing and very interested in it and you can tell that her knowledge in it is best and so I feel like she definitely tries to just like her being their alone kinda bumps everyone else up. Wants to do well, and yeah.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;And um it just they they see her more like as a as a friend that they can go to and just kinda like talk to them talk to her and just just get information that they need. It’s just like a friend resource that you can get whatever you want from.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Connections

"The biggest thing I mean she basically like runs everything in here. And so it just helps she gets everybody together, gets everybody talking and stuff and obviously like there are some people who don’t like get into it as much as other people but it just helps to have her to bring everybody together. Cause it’s hard like cause there’s a lot of people who have like a comfort zone with their friends that they already have so, it’s so she kinda brings them together."

"She does a good job of introducing you to people if you, if you go talk to her and someone comes up. She’ll go hey John this is so and so and then your just networking like that. She helps with that too for kids because I’m from out of state. I’m from Virginia. So, I don’t, I don’t know I didn’t know anyone actually when I came down to Clemson and Catherine was one of the first people I met and then I met probably 5 or 6 people just in the dorm and maybe around the building too through Catherine just having conversations with her and meeting people."

"Well I would say just today had a lunch meeting with our advisors and um just in the lounge here. They had pizza and everything. She was there and we were all just hanging out talking, eating. And she’s definitely someone that makes you feel more comfortable in settings with um college meetings and stuff like that. She’s there I feel like to ease the transition a lot. So that would be one example of where she like brought down the um I don’t know like the official feeling of the meeting. She made it more comfortable."

### Decision Making

"But I feel like it it [HEHD 199 class] helps you like it helps you sort of transition a little bit and helped you like put into perspective what’s going on and like in your daily life while your at college like how your food like how you deal with food. And like how what you eat and stuff like that like you don’t really think about it when you’re doing it but like if you reflect on it it’s sort of a whole different aspect of it."

"She does encourage us to do well in our classes but also like um just like not doing drugs and alcohol. Like we did that class the HEHD 199. We did that together and so in that whenever we were working in groups or whatever we were meeting for that class we would ta talk about you know being as healthy as possible because we are nursing majors and we need to live out what we you know do in our profession."
"She helped me a lot with um, scheduling especially. And I had planned on studying abroad when I talked with her last and she helped me in umm, just letting me know what I needed to do in order to make that happen. Cause for a nursing major especially um we have very specific requirements for courses that we have to fulfill and so like it is a very small window of opportunity that we have too do that. So she was helpful to help me figure that out."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>&quot;I have noticed she’s cause she’s a nursing major. That she tends to be pro nursing majors. So like, I mean I guess like she doesn’t mean to come off like that but sometimes it’s like nursing, nursing, nursing and your like well I’m a PRTM like what about me.&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Environment | "There aren’t a whole lot of emails you have to send out because people are always around the building you can just see someone and say hey I was going to shoot you an email but now I don’t have to cause we’re all in everyone’s in nice nice quarters. Like some people might think it’s tight quarters but it’s a small amount of people. So it’s good to like have a better personal relationship with kids going through the same thing you’re going through freshman year."

| Environment | "There’s a desk out in the lobby as you walk in. It’s to the right. Um, and she sits there a lot um I guess it’s just like supervise. I, I think all the RAs kinda switch off."

| Relationships | "By providing a peer mentor they are trying to give us someone that we can come to with questions uhhh informally. That we can develop relationship with that is not exactly faculty, to student but rather student to student and uhh also someone who has been there with more experience and someone who ummm, is able to say I have been there. And give us a helping hand."

| Relationships | "He does a good job of getting everyone to like kinda have a bit of a bonding. Cause this is a smaller dorm for freshmen than the other ones. So it’s easier to get more of a one on one relationship with few people than having to just to have a bunch of acquaintances. Cause we’re only here, it’s just, it’s kinda like a big house pretty much because there aren’t that many people here."

| Relationships | "Whenever I do we always have a we always share a joke or something like that. She’s easy, she’s real easy to talk to. She’s real friendly."

Also during the open coding phase, the researcher extracted three categories and sixty-six initial codes from the data. The researcher used Nvivo9™ qualitative research
software (QSR International, n.d.) to code both the initial concepts and create the three categories and sixty-six initial codes. See Table 5 for the initial three categories and sixty-six initial codes.

Table 5. Open Coding Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Categories</th>
<th>Initial Codes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Peer Mentor</td>
<td>1. Nice person</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Sweet</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Cares about how you are doing</td>
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<td>4. First week of bonding</td>
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<td>5. Help people</td>
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<td>6. Bubbly &amp; Smiling</td>
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<td>9. Offering a cookie</td>
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<td>10. Stops by rooms encouraging students</td>
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<td>11. Academic conversations</td>
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<td>12. Easy to relate to</td>
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<td>13. Same age</td>
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<td></td>
<td>14. Lives in the same hall</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Common ground which creates trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Upperclass senior</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17. Nursing major</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. Book of wisdom</td>
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<td>19. There for you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20. Always see her</td>
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<td>21. Visits rooms</td>
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<td>22. Being at activities</td>
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<td>23. Guide to ask questions</td>
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<td>24. Hardworker</td>
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<td>25. Dedication &amp; loyalty motivates and inspires</td>
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<td>26. Taking same class</td>
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<td>27. Being an example</td>
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<td>28. Helpful with issues and concerns</td>
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<td>29. Answers questions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30. Emotional guidance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>31. Academic scheduling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Decision Making</td>
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<tr>
<td>32. Programs in the building</td>
<td>60. Creative inquiry class</td>
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<tr>
<td>33. Helping with common injuries</td>
<td>61. Change Major</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. Meeting new people</td>
<td>62. Thought about changing major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Experiences in college</td>
<td>63. Application last minute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Core concepts of LLC</td>
<td>64. Deal with own troubles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Catherine's role</td>
<td>65. Expected to join LLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Parents expectations</td>
<td>66. Live out what we know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Beginning of the year</td>
<td>59. HEHD 199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Being away from home</td>
<td>52. Involvement in activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. High school to college</td>
<td>53. Individual kept to themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Changing majors</td>
<td>54. Academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Proximity to peers</td>
<td>55. Encourager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Close to peer mentor</td>
<td>56. Resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Living in the same hall</td>
<td>57. Role Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Desk at front door</td>
<td>58. No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Catherine there to help</td>
<td>51. Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Available</td>
<td>50. There for questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. In room or at desk</td>
<td>47. Catherine there to help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. There for questions</td>
<td>48. Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. Relationships</td>
<td>49. In room or at desk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Involvement in activities</td>
<td>50. There for questions</td>
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<td>53. Individual kept to themselves</td>
<td>51. Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>54. Academics</td>
<td>52. Involvement in activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>55. Encourager</td>
<td>53. Individual kept to themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td>56. Resource</td>
<td>54. Academics</td>
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<tr>
<td>57. Role Model</td>
<td>55. Encourager</td>
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<td>58. No impact</td>
<td>56. Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>59. HEHD 199</td>
<td>57. Role Model</td>
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<td>60. Creative inquiry class</td>
<td>58. No impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>61. Change Major</td>
<td>59. HEHD 199</td>
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<tr>
<td>62. Thought about changing major</td>
<td>60. Creative inquiry class</td>
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<tr>
<td>63. Application last minute</td>
<td>61. Change Major</td>
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<td>64. Deal with own troubles</td>
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<td>65. Expected to join LLC</td>
<td>63. Application last minute</td>
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<tr>
<td>66. Live out what we know</td>
<td>64. Deal with own troubles</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

64
Axial Coding

Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated the researcher will take the initial categories and begin to regroup and redefine the initial codes to create subcategories. This process allowed the researcher to analyze the relationships within and between each category. The researcher was able through this analysis to see how the data in each category influenced one another. See Table 6 to see how categories and initial codes were regrouped and redefined from the initial concepts and categories.

Table 6. Axial Coding: Redefining and Regrouping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Categories</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Initial Codes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of Peer mentor</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>1. Nice person</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Sweet</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>3. Cares about how you are doing</td>
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<td>4. First week of bonding</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Help people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
<td>6. Bubbly &amp; Smiling</td>
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<td>7. Good mood</td>
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<td>Encourager</td>
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<td>Physical</td>
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<td>46. Desk at front door</td>
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<td>Approachable</td>
<td>47. Catherine there to help</td>
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<td>62. Thought about changing major</td>
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<td>Personal desires</td>
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<td></td>
<td>64. Deal with own troubles</td>
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<td>Parents</td>
<td>65. Expected to join LLC</td>
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<td>Peer mentor</td>
<td>66. Live out what we know</td>
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<td>encouragement</td>
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Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) emphasized the importance of allowing participants to react and respond to the comparisons being made from the raw data. The researcher was intentional about the three participants selected to re-interview based on the comparisons being made during axial coding. The three participants were re-interviewed to collect more raw data to continue to explain and develop the emerging theory as well as provide strength to the researcher’s initial concepts and categories.

The three participants were selected for a second interview because their initial interviews provided substance and detail in their stories of the experiences with the living-learning community and interactions with the peer mentor. The researcher tried to take into account the different backgrounds and pick the participants who were different from one another to glean a deeper understanding into what was being conceptualized during the axial coding phase. Each participant who had a second interview was part of the living-learning community for the entire year and stayed in their major the whole year. The participants were a nursing major, a professional golf management major, and a special education major. All three participated in the HEHD 199 creative inquiry class the second semester. Below is the following student demographics for the second interviews.
Student 1, a nursing major with a self-reported GPR of 4.0, self-identified as an 18 year old White male.

Student 4, a PRTM/professional golf management major with a self-reported GPR of 3.94, self-identified as an 18 year old White male.

Student 7, a special education major with a self-reported GPR of 3.23, self-identified as an 18 year old White female.

Follow-up interview questions were created intentionally to explore the categories that were emerging from the raw data about the role, interactions, and impact of the interactions the members were having with the peer mentor. The researcher asked the following follow-up questions during the second interview:

1. What is new with the HEHD LLC since we last met?
2. Do you see Catherine as more of a peer advisor or peer mentor?
3. I have heard the theme of nice, sweet, caring. Can you give me 3 examples of things Catherine has done that are nice, sweet, or caring?
4. Would you characterize Catherine as a more of a resource or friend?
5. Visible is another theme that I have noticed. How often do you see Catherine?
6. In the capacities that you see her is she serving in her role as a peer mentor?
7. The peer mentor’s relationship with HEHD community members provides opportunities for individual residents to understand their role in society. Do you agree with this statement?
8. Can you think of a statement that would describe the role of the peer mentor better?
9. What things has Catherine done to support you this semester?

**Selective Coding**

The researcher used selective coding to interpret the data and then refine categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Selective coding was used to analyze the data to make sure the data was relevant and applicable to all stories within the study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher interpreted the data to find relational statements or interrelated concepts which were extracted from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher created a diagram which provides a summary of the explanation and depicts the relationships among the concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The explanation is described and illustrated under An Explanation of Residents’ Interactions with a Peer Mentor on page 69.

**Member Checking**

The researcher conducted member checking to ensure the interpretations of the stories that the researcher was making were aligned with the experiences of the participants. The member checking happened in two phases. During the first phase, the researcher created an explanation for each one of the categories and subcategories. An email was sent to each participant asking them to do three things: (a) read through their transcript and give feedback, (b) read through their field notes and give feedback, and (c) read through the initial categories and give feedback. The participants were asked for their feedback in regards to the accuracy and provide critical feedback on the transcript, field notes, and initial categories after open coding (See Appendix F – Member Checking: Phase One). During the second phase, participants were asked for their
feedback on the diagram in Figure 1, located on page 69, and a brief summary of that diagram. The researcher asked the participants to send back their critiqued feedback (See Appendix G – Member Checking: Phase Two).

During member checking phase one, participant 12 responded back and stated “everything looks good!”, and participant 13 responded back and stated “the information looks really good”. Student 3 also responded to member checking phase one and stated “I looked at you categories and subcategories and the only thing else I would have included in the characteristics part was the trait that a Peer Advisor has to be like a liaison between the LLC and the college or department it is linked to. I don’t know if anyone else brought up that Idea when talking to you.”

During member checking phase two, participant 12 responded back and stated “This looks great! I can't think of anything else to add or change. Best of luck with everything!” This was the only participant to respond back during phase two.

**Data Saturation**

Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated data saturation is achieved when no new information emerges during the coding process and warned that new information always has the potential to emerge. Strauss and Corbin (1998) articulated that data saturation is ultimately the researcher’s discretion. Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasized multiple interviews can help saturate the data. Thus, the researcher intentionally interviewed three participants a second time to discuss initial concepts and categories, explore the emerging explanation, and to see if saturation had occurred. The researcher began to see data
saturation after the 11th interview but proceeded to conduct three more initial interviews and three additional follow-up interviews to be thorough.

**Data Triangulation**

Triangulation of data involved comparing information gathered in interviews, documents and direct observation to one another. In this study, the following sources of data were triangulated to bolster data analysis: (a) interviews with the peer mentor, and administrators involved with the living-learning community, (b) observations from planned activities, (c) Peer Advisor job description and manual, (d) Web pages from the college of the living-learning community. See Table 7 – Sources for Data Triangulation below for a complete listing of sources used in this study.

Table 7. Sources for Data Triangulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Document or Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with administrators and peer mentor</td>
<td>Transcript of interview with administrative representative from the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcript of interview with resident director of the building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcript of interview with the peer mentor of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of planned activities</td>
<td>Typed field notes of sex jeopardy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typed field notes of the game of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typed field notes of the saint patrick's day hunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Typed field notes of the pizza lunches with advisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and day to day operation materials</td>
<td>Peer advisor job description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer advisor manual</td>
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<td>Information regarding the college and LLC</td>
<td>Research's institutional site for the college</td>
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<td>Research's institutional college site with six dispositions</td>
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**Peer Debriefing**

Peer debriefing allowed the researcher to continue to test the saturation of data. The researcher utilized the methodology expert on his dissertation committee as a peer
reviewer throughout the study (Creswell, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The peer
debriefing consisted of regular meetings throughout the data analysis process to examine,
evaluate, and interpret the data being collected and the emerging concepts and categories.
The committee member discussed and critiqued the emergent theory and challenged the
researcher on coding and delivery of the theory. The peer debriefing added to the study
by helping the researcher to hear the stories (Stake, 1995), share those stories through
rich, thick descriptions (Creswell, 2003), and create an explanation of the combined
stories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

An Explanation of Residents’ Interactions with a Peer Mentor

The following qualitative narrative explains residents’ interactions with a peer
mentor. “The Model” (Figure 1) provides a visual representation of the grounded theory
which emerged to explain this interaction. The grounded theory provides three central
themes: (a) characteristics of the peer mentor, (b) environment of the living-learning
community, and (c) decision making of the residents. The subcategories of caring,
positive attitude, encourager, peer, experience, availability, role model, and resource
compose the characteristics of the peer mentor. The subcategories of expectations,
transitions, physical, availability, connections, involvement, individual, and academics
make up the environments of the living-learning community. The subcategories of
academics, extracurricular, future, day-to-day decisions, parents, and peer mentor
characterize the decision making by the students.
Figure 1. Residents' Interactions with their Peer Mentor: A Grounded Theory

Students of LLC

Living-Learning Community

Characteristics of the Peer Mentor

- Caring
- Positive Attitude
- Encourager
- Peer Experience

Available Role Model Resource

Environment of the LLC

- Expectations
- Transitions
- Physical Approachability
- Connections
- Involvement
- Individual
- Academic Milieu

Outside Influences

Decision Making
This explanation illuminates how the characteristics of the peer mentor have an interaction with the environment created within the living-learning community and how both are interrelated with the decisions students make on a daily basis and for their future. The characteristics of the peer mentor theme identified the common attributes the residents ascribed to the peer mentor. These characteristics of the peer mentor helped define the role of the peer mentor within the community. The environment of the living-learning community category highlights the expectations the residents had, the transitions the students experienced, the physical environment, the connections made, and the academic milieu. The interplay between the major categories can be explained in an example where the physical elements of the building and the different characteristics of the peer mentor combine to create an environment where the peer mentor is perceived to be available. Students were also able to make academic and social connections in the living-learning community with the peer mentor and other members. Finally, the students made decisions based on the characteristics of the peer mentor and the environment of the living-learning community. The residents were able to make day-to-day decisions both inside and outside the classroom by incorporating personal, parental, and peer mentor advice.

Overall, the stories of the participants provided rich, thick descriptions (Creswell, 2003) of detail in understanding the characteristics of the peer mentor, how academic performance was affected, and the environment the living-learning community created. The researcher noticed a special relationship between the characteristics of the peer mentor and the living-learning community environment created that led to the decision
making practices of the residents. The following section narrates the grounded theory which explains how the peer mentor interacted with the residents of the living-learning community.

**Characteristics of the Peer Mentor**

The characteristics of Catherine, the peer mentor, was the dominate theme within the stories of the participants. Catherine’s characteristics included: caring, positive attitude, encourager, being a peer, experienced, approachable, available, hard worker, role model, and resource. The characteristics are placed in this order as each characteristics builds on one another. This idea of building or interrelated interaction is critical in understanding how the later categories of the environment of the living-learning community and decision making of the residents are connected to one another. Each one of these characteristics is described by the participants below and can be seen in Figure 2.
Figure 2. Characteristics of the Peer Mentor

Peer Mentor Characteristics

- Resource
- Caring
- Available
- Peer
- Encourager
- Experience
- Role Model
- Positive Attitude

The general sense of the peer mentor from the participants was that Catherine was generally liked by everyone in the living-learning community. Even the administrators agreed. The living-learning community administrator commented that Catherine was chosen for her “personability”. The residence hall administrator stated that Catherine was someone “to listen to you”. The residents of the community provided examples and vignettes which express the likability of Catherine. Student 8 said, “Everyone for the most part likes. They like Catherine. I, I can’t really think of any times [where someone has said they did not like her].” Student 4 also stated in the first interview:

They all seem to kinda think she is really cool. Um. I have never heard anyone really say anything negative about her…I think kinda the general idea about it, it’s pretty nice. Everyone kinda likes her, um. There’s never really been any like hard feelings or anything.

Other students explained how Catherine is a person who is amazing because she is nice, sweet, and caring. The students used these words continuously throughout the interviews. These words of nice, sweet, and caring provide indirect illustration that Catherine was generally liked by students. Student 11 stated, “she’s a nice person. It’s just kinda I mean she has nice things to say sometimes.” Student 12 characterized the general sense of what students were saying about Catherine being nice and sweet as “we are all really on the same page with that we all agree that she is really good.” Student 3’s provided examples about how Catherine is amazing in the students’ eyes:

She’s very calm first of all because she’s like dealing with a lot of people and a lot of different questions at once. She is very calm, um, She’s very like understanding like she’s uh great listener. Like something’s going on in your classes she’s like yeah come to my room like sit down um. She’s really supportive. Like when we join like different activities on campus or like we like did well on a class project she like you know oh my gosh I heard about your
project. And I heard about you joining this what’s it like you’re like doing really well. So like just like those characteristics make her amazing.

Student 14 when describing Catherine stated she was “nice, willing to help you with anything anything I have ever had to talk to her about. She was upfront and you know willing to help in any way she could…Just all around nice person.” Student 2 noted, “she is really nice and so you know we’re chill.” Student 11 also stated, “she’s nice, she’s kinda hard to approach I guess. But she’s like a nice person.” Student 4 noted in the first interview, “She’s very nice. Um, she’s always very positive. Um, probably the most positive person in the building actually. I feel like I am giving her too much praise, but she is a really nice person.” Student 7 also noted in the first interview, “she’s very sweet. And nice and hardworking and yeah those would be what came to mind as well.” Student 1 provided in the first interview, “Oh she’s uhh very nice she’s sweet.”

Student gave examples of Catherine being generally liked by all the community and had a personality that is described as nice, sweet, and caring. These general characteristics provide a glimpse into the nature of Catherine.

Caring

The residents provided stories and depicted Catherine as having a characteristic of caring. Student 9 said, “She’s caring.” Within this subcategory of caring the participants describe caring two different ways. The first way Catherine exhibited caring was showing the students she cared for them through actions and words. The second idea that underscores Catherine’s caring characteristic is that she was a nursing major. She was willing to help them, go to the hospital, or share her knowledge about medicine to help
the students. Student 13 described one of Catherine’s characteristics as “caring, mainly caring.” Student 13 also noted,

...she just like, she just like looks into into like what you what you want. And she cares about like how you’re doing. And she’ll check up on you and stuff and she she just wants you to have the best experience that you that you can have. And try to make it like as flawless as possible.

Student 4 provided an example in the first interview where Catherine displayed a posture of caring by opening her arms where she symbolically showed she cares, “She kinda helps like I said the first day we moved in uh, she kinda opened up her arms like ‘hey come on in.’” Student 4 continued in the first interview, “We had a transfer come in this semester and all the guys on the hall were like hey she’s down stairs go say hi and stuff. Kinda like welcomes everyone in it seems like.”

In the peer mentor resource manual there was a section on skills for effective mentors for working with individual students. These skills included listening and responding to students. The peer mentor resource manual document provided skills that enabled Catherine to be caring. Student 13 when talking about Catherine’s role stated, “honestly to just like get to know us and try to help us out if we need anything really.” Student 1 in the first interview stated, “she will treat you very very respectfully, umm very well.”

Students described Catherine not directly as caring but provided examples where she went to the hospital or helped someone clean a wound or provided information on a health issue that created a caring environment. Student 7 in the first interview stated Catherine went to the hospital to be with a student “because they were sick”. Student 4 in the first interview said, “she’s a nursing major. I broke my wrist actually last semester.
So, she kinda talked with me about it.” Student 4 in the first interview went on to provide an example of his conversations with Catherine about his wrist:

I went down stairs and she was wondering what happened to my wrist and uh so I got my bone stimulator which is uh how I help heal it faster and was showing her all the nics and crannies of it. We kinda just talked for about 20 minutes about you know how’s life how’s college going.

Student 5, who is not a member of the LLC, noted that Catherine cared for her by cleaning up the wound but did not like that Catherine told her she was taking care of it wrong:

There’s, there’s probably, oh, like during the first like month of being here we were playing like games on the lawn and I uh, my shoes have no traction and I slipped and got a huge raspberry on my upper thigh, lower buttocks area and she cleaned it up and told me that I was taking care of it wrong.

Student 12 said Catherine’s “personality traits” of sweet and caring are seen by “you know she is always letting us know that if we have any questions or anything. Well she is a nursing major so definitely that, the whole thing that goes with that. That goes with understanding.”

Some students did not come out and directly say Catherine was caring, but they provided stories which show this theme of caring. Student 10 stated Catherine has patience by stating, “I guess patience with since there are a lot of questions.” Student 3 described how Catherine shows interest in the residents:

She’s very like understanding. She’s uh great listener. Like something’s going on in your classes she’s like yeah come to my room like sit down um. She’s really supportive. Like when we join like different activities on campus or like we like did well on a class project she like you know oh my gosh I heard about your project.
Student 3 also described through a story about the first week of school how Catherine displayed a caring nature:

She I I like I like the first week of school like got the I am 8 ½ hours away from home and I was just like like made me like kinda be like wait I am now 8 ½ hours away and my parents aren’t here and like she like took so much time out of her like schedule and she was so busy with her classes to like check on me everyday and just be like so you know what happened today. Did you talk to your mom? Like to make it easier so like that brought us really close and now she knows she will pop into my room and we’ll talk about like my life and then her life and what is going on with like her sister and uh she seems like that because we had that first week of bonding. She doesn’t seem like someone distant that’s just there to like I don’t know like sometimes your professors and like people in HEHD like they seem like distant because like I had that personal level built with her right away she’s like I consider her like a friend.

Student 4 in the first interview stated:

I feel like you know there’s also those times she, she always puts up sticky notes up on our doors like have a great week. Um, something along, once she came around with cookies. Just seems to bring us kinda closer together.

Student 8 noted:

She’ll come by and knock on the door and ask for something. But usually when she knocked on the door you open the door and it’s Catherine she’s like offering you a cookie. Or she or something great that I really love about Catherine is she always comes around your room when it’s like mid terms or finals or something. And she puts a little sticky note like on your door. That says like good luck on finals then she’ll sign it like herself. I’ve seen her walk around doing them individually like by herself. It’s nice to get that little, instead of having to print out a copy. She goes by and does like hand hand written so it feels like it means something.

Student 3 expressed:

She’s a sweetheart. She is like somebody you can go to and like be like I don’t understand this I don’t like here’s like I got an email I don’t know what I am doing. And she’ll like bend over backwards contact people, call people until like you have a good answer and that you are ok like she’s somebody there to like support you because you as a freshman you don’t have all the answers.
Student 4 in the second interview when asked how Catherine is caring he stated:

She always gives everyone cards for their birthday…. Um, she always comes by uh like before finals and gives us like little care package or uh she always leaves like little sticky notes on the door you know like good luck this week you’re half way there I just kind of reminders.

Student 3 explained how Catherine’s caring for residents led other residents to care for one another,

I mean in a way like the other girls on my hallway have become mentors. Because we all have our moments where we like hit rock bottom and there and then like they step in and kinda act like little Catherine’s. like I don’t know like they there like they know what to say because she has helped them. And they are like lets talk about this. So like I think in a way like we have all had a point where we have had to be like ok let’s channel our inner Catherine. Let’s see what’s wrong. And like that you know is cause she’s helped us and it is our turn to help somebody else.

There were times where Catherine’s caring nature went a little to far. Student 9 provided, “She just she likes to to help so I guess she she just like’s to be really helpful. And like she tries to be involved even I guess sometimes if you don’t want her too.”

However, students noted Catherine’s caring nature is noticed both in her role in the nursing profession but also as a person who cares for the daily lives and happiness of the students on the hall. As student 3 stated above the students try to care for other residents based on what Catherine has done for them. The caring attribute is a working understanding of one of the dispositions of demonstrating “flexibility, resilience, adaptability, caring…”.

**Positive Attitude**

While Catherine have a caring characteristic, she also has a positive attitude.

Students stated Catherine was a paragon of exuding a positive attitude and being happy.
Student 8 explained Catherine’s positive attitude as, “she’s bubbly. She’s real friendly. She is always very energetic.” Student 8 continued, “she always has the great energy and I mean she’s just looks like it’s the best day ever every time you see her which is nice to know that someone is that happy all the time.” Student 14 described Catherine as “just you know when you look at her she’s usually smiling. She’s always happy. I have never seen her to appear to be upset about anything. Um, just general the way she presents herself.” Student 14 also said, “outgoing the same thing outgoing, willing to help, just all around nice person. I will say that you know even just seeing her in passing it’s been a nice yeah. She’s just a pleasant face a nice person to have. She’s encouraging”

Student 4 in the first interview stated, “She always seems to be in a good mood.” Student 4 in the first interview continued by stating, “she’s very social. Uh, She’s very nice. Um, she’s always very positive. Um, probably the most positive person in the building actually. I feel like I am giving her to much praise, but she is a really nice person.”

Student 6 provided an example where a positive attitude leads to Catherine saying hi by noting:

Whenever we walk by her door well she’ll say hi. You know whenever we see her she will say hi. So that is a positive impact because you know you don’t want you know a peer mentor that’s not you know going to say hey cause that’s just negative.

Catherine’s characteristics of caring and positive attitude provide a lens to see how the students viewed Catherine as an encourager in the community.
Encourager

Catherine encouraged the students in both school work and outside the classroom. The residents provided examples of how Catherine encouraged the students to make responsible decisions based on information learned in the classroom to apply it outside the classroom. Also, the residence hall administrator stated “the role she was definitely an encourager with the students like I always saw notes on the door.” The peer mentor resource manual also provided examples of issues that students might face and provided examples of how to encourage the residents. Student 10 noted:

she does encourage us to do well in in our classes but also like um just like not doing drugs and alcohol. Like we did that class the HEHD 199. We did that together and so in that whenever we were working in groups or whatever we were meeting for that class we would ta talk about you know being as healthy as possible because we are nursing majors and we need to live out what we you know do in our profession. Um, and I guess just along that basis like not drinking and not doing drugs and being healthy and exercising.

Residents explained how Catherine would make random visits, leave notes on doors, or ask students what they were involved in which gave students the encouragement they needed to succeed outside the classroom. Student 10 also provided:

I know she encourages us a lot like. I’ll come back to my room and I’ll have like a note like sticky note on my door. Or like it’s the week before finals don’t be stressed. If you need any help come, see me. Um, or just notes like under the door or like candy stuck to the door. It’s like so she’s been very encouraging through that.

Student 8 stated:

Maybe people will say man like I’m doing work right now and she’ll come by and knock on the door and ask for something. But usually when she knocked on the door you open the door and it’s Catherine she’s like offering you a cookie. Or she or something great that I really love about Catherine is she always comes around your room when it’s like mid terms or finals or something. And she puts a little sticky note like on your door. That says like good luck on finals then she’ll sign it
like herself. I’ve seen her walk around doing them individually like by herself. It’s nice to get that little, instead of having to print out a copy. She goes by and does like hand hand written so it feels like it means something.

Student 13 explained:

…one of the things that kinda helped me was um one time I she just like kinda asked me to do things to like get involved and that kinda like help me out to get to meet people in the um the living-learning community. And like usually like I don’t know I’ve kinda like hung with like my high school friends and I’ve kinda gotten to know like them better, so outside people more as she like asks me to do stuff and things like that.

Involvement was a hot topic for students. The residents expressed they felt Catherine encouraged them to get involved in different activities on campus. Student 13 continued to explain the encouraging theme by stating:

The biggest thing I mean she basically like runs everything in here. And so it just helps she gets everybody together, gets everybody talking and stuff and obviously like there are some people who don’t like get into it as much as other people but it just helps to have her to bring everybody together. Cause it’s hard like cause there’s a lot of people who have like a comfort zone with their friends that they already have so, it’s so she kinda brings them together and helps that a little bit.

Student 3 stated:

She’s really supportive. Like when we join like different activities on campus or like we like did well on a class project she like you know oh my gosh I heard about your project. And I heard about you joining this what’s it like you’re like doing really well. So like just like those characteristics make her amazing.

Student 8 expressed:

She’s likes to get people involved. She doesn’t like when everyone’s sittin’ around doing nothing. Cause that’s that’s boring and this HEHD isn’t about sitting around. So, she likes to get everyone out and like about and just helping out with things, So it’s nice having someone in the building that can keep you motivated like that.
Student 4 in the first interview said:

I feel like you know there’s also those times she she always puts up sticky notes up on our doors like have a great week. Um, something along, once she came around with cookies. Just seems to bring us kinda closer together keep us more, keep us in line I guess, like I kinda said.

Students noted the secure feeling in the living-learning community environment helped calm them to be able to complete class assignments within the community.

Student 13 noted:

I don’t know if it’s that much of a big deal with academics but I think it’s more of when as she like makes you feel more secure in like the environment like the college environment you if you feel better than you’ll perform better on like test and things and you can you your more comfortable like doing your work and it helps you like if your if your calm and accepting everything like in the community then you then you accept it and you can calm down and focus on stuff better. So it, so it helps in that way I guess but not like directly academically.

Encouragement to the residents came in many forms from Catherine which included: helped students pursue academic conversations outside the classroom, visited the rooms, left notes or gifts, and assisted in creating a calm environment to study. Catherine was not only able to read the position description and resource manual but was able to put the skills to action which was understood by the residents as encouragement.

Peer

Students said having someone to relate to as a peer provided them a connection to the university in a comfortable way. The living-learning community administrator stated the peer mentor was to be “a student, that they [living-learning community residents] could relate to that was going to be around when we weren’t.” The position description outlined the peer mentor must be a upperclass peer student in the college. Student 1 in the first interview explained, “so its, really gives us someone we can easily relate too who
is not a uhh figure that can get us in trouble.” Student 1 continued that Catherine was, “someone our age that has been through what we have been through.”

Student 8 stated:

And its really nice having people that are that can relate to you some like having people around my age to relate to you. Cause I love working with people that are older too but having someone closer to my age especially at this time is nice to know. And HEHD seems like has a pretty um amount of like young minds so to speak. And there is nice having someone to relate to in different situations.

Student 10 shared an example of living in the same hall and being a student as well provided a common ground which created trust:

she’s a peer like she lives in in the dorm with me like right down the hall. Like she’s going to Clemson just like I am and like I like that makes it like to where we have a lot in common. So it gives you that common ground. So that you can have like a friend relationship with her and. But also for her to help you. So you will like trust her more because you have that common ground.

Student 12 expressed having a person close to her age helped her feel like Catherine could relate to her:

I had a question about a class that I have to take. That was, she was the first person I ran into asking because she is someone who is close to my age so she can understand where I am coming from with that.

The residents stated having a peer that was close in age, living in the same residence hall creates common ground that builds trust. Catherine being a peer helps the students to easily relate to her. Catherine’s characteristic of being a peer is a foundation of being available and a resource.

**Experience**

Catherine was a senior student who had experience at the university. The first attribute the living-learning community described Catherine as having was “an upper-
class uh HEHD student who was chosen for their maturity and their knowledge.” Student 10 explained, “I would say they are an upperclassmen in your college. So for this instance it would be HEHD. Um, that lives in your dorm dorm with you. You actually take a class with them.” Student 10 also expressed, “she is a senior. So she’s been through what I am going through.” Student 1 in the first interview explained the importance of the experience by, “she knows what she is talking about.” Student 1 said in his second interview:

If I were to put it in my own words the peer mentor, Catherine, is to kinda provide students with um an accessible person that has gone through what they’ve gone through and uh provide a resource for which they can easily um just talk about situations and previous experiences and kinda pick her mind in order to help them with their transition from college to or high school to college.

Student 7 in her second interview stated:

I think she’s definitely a resource too because um I think she knows a lot about the college and about program so you can go to her if you have questions about anything. I think she knows a lot about it. But I think that’s part of the mentor aspect and I think that she can be friends with the students but it’s definitely more of a mentor relationship because all uh how do I put this, it’s she because she’s so much more experienced. Because she’s a senior and everything just she’s kinda on a different level than the freshman I would say. And so because of that experience that she has it’s just more of a mentor mentality.

Student 3 expressed:

…who is just on our hall that happens to be older and happens to have the book of wisdom like she like isn’t she not there to be like you know your breaking a rule don’t do that. I mean like she steps in when she has too and when something getting out of control I see more like just another student. Just happen to be here longer than us.

Student 8 said:

It’s nice having someone like that’s older than us and has more experience at this school talking to us. Maybe get maybe not intentionally giving us advice but giving that one on one like talking experience is nice to hear from someone that
has been through the college experience for the most part.

Student 1 in the first interview stated:

As far as what it’s uhhh trying to accomplish ehhh, I think, by providing a peer mentor they are trying to give us someone that we can come to with questions uhhh informally. That we can develop relationship with that is not exactly faculty, to student but rather student to student and uhh also someone who has been there with more experience and someone who ummm, is able to say I have been there. And give us a helping hand.

Student 7 in the first interview expressed:

I think she’s definitely a good role model because I know that she is involved in a lot with the college. And she seems very hardworking with her nursing and very interested in it and you can tell that her knowledge in it is best and so I feel like she definitely tries to just like her being their alone kinda bumps everyone else up. Wants to do well, and yeah.

Student 2 noted:

I was sitting in my uh neighbors room and we were all just hanging out and she came in and started chatting with us. And she was helping um, one of my neighbors move out actually and she was really helpful, um. She knew a lot of the answers about some of the specifics and then she just hung out with us for a while so, it was pretty cool.

Student 3 explained how the experience allowed Catherine to know when to step in a help the students when issues arised:

…she’s, we uh, like we have in our hall way we have decorated it with paper chains that we did for somebody’s birthday and we were um hanging them up in the hallway like a really tedious process. And we were like there were a whole bunch of girls we were all like micro managing and nit picking at each other. And making comments. And she came out in the hallway sat and just started like talking about like something to totally get our mind off of it and she started like singing and everybody started singing along with her and we had like a little sing off in the hallway and it was just like you live with you know eight girls and like really sick of these people at a certain point. And she always knows when to step in and be like here let’s talk about something different or let’s do something fun.
Catherine has the academic experience to help students with where they were in school. Student 12 stated, “and especially since she’s a senior you know she has been through the program so knows what you know what they all have been asking her about what to expect in the future.” Student 3 noted, “tips that like only somebody who went through the HEH HEHD process would like understand.” Student 1 in the first interview said:

As far as academic standing umm we’ve talked about classes before ummm she kind of helped me out in uhh nursing 140 it was where uhh you know where you first get into a class you don’t really know how the test are or what the teacher is like you can do as well as you can but if you don’t do what the teacher wants then you get a bad grade she’s kinda of helped us because she has been through the same classes that we have as far as what the teachers want what how we should gear our studying towards and more vocabulary, more concepts. So she certainly umm helped me out at nursing 140 which was a lot of jumping through the hoops.

Student 10 explained:

...for me anyways, I see her as just like a helper. Um, just because she is in my same major and she is a senior. So she’s been through what I am going through, and so I can ask her questions and um get her feedback on what she thinks is best. And even if I had like homework questions because she’s taken those classes. So she knows what she is talking about.

Student 3 noted:

So like if we did not understand something then we would go to her but I think she would even like more as we got to know her better as like an emotional tool. Like This is what you are going to go through your first year as an HEHD student like these like this is the dean like you know get to know him, tips that like only somebody who went through the HEH HEHD process would like understand.

Catherine having the experience as a nursing major was noted by participants as being helpful for up and coming nursing major. Student 2 noted, “she is a senior nursing major and so it’s a hard major to get into.” Student 4 in the first interview explained, “she’s a nursing major.” Student 10 stated, “Very intelligent. I mean because she is very
knowledgeable about nursing because she is a senior in the nursing um major.” Student 12 expressed, “Well she is a nursing major so definitely that, the whole thing that goes with that. That goes with understanding.” Student 12 went on to say:

Well definitely for nursing majors, you know since she is in it as well. It is definitely very helpful for them because they have exactly the same. And especially since she’s a senior you know she has been through the program so knows what you know what they all have been asking her about what to expect in the future.

Student 1 in the second interview noted:

I don’t really look at her as with a title cause I don’t know she’s just Catherine. She’s someone at least for me as a nurse as a freshmen nurse especially someone who has gone through what I am going to go through the next four semesters. So I just ask her really it’s more like someone who’s been there before.

Student 6 stated:

She went through some of the well she’s nursing, I’m nursing. So, She went through everything I’m going through so um and but like the basic classes. I am sure like most everyone here has to take chemistry. She went through chemistry, biology. She went through biology. So, if we had any questions we come go to her. I know a few times I personally came to her like um being that she is a nursing major, and she’s in her fourth year.

Most students expressed Catherine’s experience had helped them in some way. However, student 1 provided an example of Catherine needing to be more up-to-date with pop cultural or societal expectations. Student 1 in the first interview said, “She was home schooled whenever she was younger.” Student 1 also in the first interview provided, “I would make fun of her because she is extremely conservative and so easy to kind of poke at.” Student 1 in his second interview continued:

Most of the time it’s just really for specific examples it would just be kinda us chiding her for her kinda being a little bit naïve but you know understanding that like uh the world is like not exactly as she was raise. And like uh to believe in uh
with home schooling. Kinda that. Sort of ideal that’s where we get the she’s a definitely very sweet and nice and kind idea from.

Students valued the experience Catherine had at the University. Her being a senior student and had knowledge of the university and curriculum allowed students especially the nursing majors to navigate the academic environment with ease. This experience also allowed Catherine to complete the job requirement from the position description to “answer questions concerning HEHD programs, HEHD learner dispositions, or serve as a referral to an academic advisor.”

Available

Another characteristic that was mentioned by the students and administrators as well as being described in the document artifacts was Catherine being available. Students had an expectation that Catherine be available because of her other characteristic of caring, positive attitude, encourager, peer and experience. In the Spring semester, Catherine was doing nursing clinicals from 5:00am till 5:00pm at night and students and administrators still stated she was available. The living-learning community administrator stated Catherine’s role was designed to:

...be around when we weren’t. Because you know I’m not there on weekends and you know I’m not there at night. And you know I mean just someone who’s responsible and knowledgeable and we knew they were going to give them good information but you know that kinda go to person at 10 pm when you are stressed about your chemistry exam tomorrow to go to that person and be able to say you know look it’s going to be ok. You know this is what we are going to do. We’re going to handle it and kinda be that front line person when we’re not there.

The residence hall administrator gave examples of how Catherine was available that included “Like good luck with your exams, happy birthday, she was always doing things
like that. And so I feel like the role of the peer mentor was to be available and present within the community. And to be a help and support.”

Student 10 explained, “I think the purpose of the peer mentor is um to have someone here. Um, just very conveniently um so that we can go and ask her questions anytime.” Student 9 said, “she is someone who’s always there if you need help. At like emotional guidance or something. Or if you’re having a bad day you can go and talk to her. And uh, she’ll guide you.” Student 4 in the first interview stated, “Alright, um, well it is nice no matter every morning I come down stairs she is always like hey how’s it going.” Student 4 in the first interview also said, “she is kinda the person that uh almost seems like she is charge, without being the RD. Um, She is kinda there.” Student 5 noted, “she’s at the desk a lot.” Student 12 said, “really helpful in being there for you and always know that if you need someone to talk to their there to guide you through it.”

Student 3 noted, “she like I have always seen her.”

Students described that the front desk by the entrance gave them an opportunity to interact with Catherine often because to them she seemed to always be sitting there studying or talking to someone. Student 1 in the first interview stated:

Oh I talk to her a lot. She’s umm has a desk right by the door. That I umm talk to her whenever I like umm whenever I see that she’s gotten back from clinical I will ask how those are and like uhh ask her kinda about her senior year is and like different opportunities that like nursing students can go into and kinda how our schedule works. So I have talked to her numerous times even though I don’t live on her floor because she makes her self available really a lot.

Student 1 in his second interview noted:

She always works on her desk there whenever she’s uh studying for an exam or anything. Eh from what I understand when she’s studying she’s at that desk near
the front door. Um, which was helpful for me to find her the first few weeks because guys weren’t allowed to go on the girl’s floor for the first two weeks.

Student 1 also in his second interview noted:

if I were to put it in my own words the peer mentor, Catherine, is to kinda provide students with um an accessible person that has gone through what they’ve gone through and uh provide a resource for which they can easily um just talk about situations and previous experiences and kinda pick her mind in order to help them with their transition from college to or high school to college.

Student 4 in his second interview continued:

I see her a hand full of times a week. Um, whether it’s coming down stairs and she’s always in the lobby uh working on her computer. I always give her a hard time about the project she was working on she’s doing a project with a big board I just told her the colors were clashing. She always got made at me we’d get into an argument of what colors match. Um, yeah and sometimes she’ll swing by I might see her occasionally down the hallway dropping stuff off, usually about four or five times a week. I’d say three or four times a week. Depends on the week and what’s going on.

Student 8 provided:

Well Catherine does a great job of putting a smile on your face coming down the stairs because she’s right there going to every class leaving the building, so that’s nice to have someone there. And um, she kinda goes around the dorms and then she gets a nice one on one. She’ll come to your room sit down on your couch and talk with you for a few minutes. It’s nice having someone like that’s older than us and has more experience at this school talking to us. Maybe get maybe not intentionally giving us advice but giving that one on one like talking experience is nice to hear from someone that has been through the college experience for the most part.

Student 14 noted:

Just seeing around you know. Smiling faces. Catherine sitting at the desk. You know the one that um our RAs are real good about making sure we get to know each other stuff like that.

Student 1 noted:

…whenever I um whenever I use to see her by the desk I use to like go and leave for my class a little bit early and um as I was going out the door if I had like a
question about say SNA or any of the courses that I was going through like we had this one course called what was it um nursing infromatics….Nursing infromatics was uh not very good. It was like a course where you just jump through the hoops. Like you all of our tasks were like open to the internet. And we didn’t really learn anything past like a byte a gigabyte what is the definition between data and knowledge and stuff like that and um it’s a required course for the nursing majors to take so we were all in there and just like listening to lectures that we already knew and that we could look up anyway. And um so, it was kind of a BS course and then like we had like one project like through the whole year that was just like turn in this paper about one topic that interest us and we all turned in this paper and she graded it like really harshly on formatting errors and stuff. And didn’t really do much on the content. So that was it was overall a frustrating course. So I talked to Catherine and she kinda helped me understand the format of how to study for these test in order to make a good grade. How to exactly jump through the hoop. So whenever um that was one of the first conversations that I had with her was about the nursing 140 class and she went through the same thing and she was like yeah it wasn’t that fun.

Catherine also stopped by rooms and when she did this the residents provided stories that indirectly show how Catherine was available to the residents of the community. Student 8 went on to say Catherine stops by rooms and visits:

She does a nice job of coming by when we’re in groups. She’ll come by when your alone and say like how’s it going, there’s pizza down stairs, or remember there’s an event coming up if you guys want to

Student 8 continued:

One room up on the third floor that we kinda call the man cave because it has the two lazy boys in it. Whenever you get the chance to relax you can go in there and sit down and play xbox or just hang out with friends for a little bit. And she comes in often and then she’ll just sit and talk with us when there’s like five or six of us in there. And it’s nice to get that interaction again like I said before was just nice like getting to know people like that in the building.

Students stated Catherine was available at the social events or programs. She would start conversations to connect the students to one another and help build the community. Student 14 expressed:
We have social like you know little get together things in the common room and she’s always there. And she walks around and she you know she’ll be the first one to start a conversation with you and so I mean she’s very willing to get us to know each other.

Student 10 explained:

Well there’s different social events every month. I know that RAs kinda headem’ up but Catherine helps with that like um, she helps plan them. And she’s always there at the events, that um try and get people to come together like down in the lobby or like different games and stuff.

Students explained how Catherine was available by being at the desk, coming to their rooms, and planning and attending social events for the hall. The residence hall administrator noted “she was very busy hours but when I would go on rounds of the building like her door was open when she was there, so she’s pretty available.” The intentional effort of being available along with the other characteristics of caring, positive attitude, encourager, peer and experience provide a foundation for seeing how the characteristics connect to the environment of approachability.

Role Model

Students and the administrators admired Catherine as a role model because of her experience as well as being a hard worker. The residence hall administrator when asked to describe Catherine stated “I would say [Catherine is] compassionate, hard worker, um encouraging…” The living-learning community administrator commented by describing the peer mentor as a “student who was chosen for their maturity”. When asked about Catherine’s title of peer advisor Student 7 in the second interview said:

I actually thought she was a peer mentor. So I don’t know. But I guess just because she is an extra mentor and advisor for kids. And I think a lot of kids definitely look up to her and take advice from her and she is a good role model for them.
Student 7 in the second interview went on further to explain how Catherine was a role model and stated:

> Well I think she’s a really hard worker so not only with just academically but definitely with her other extracurricular activities. I know that she does a lot for the school. So I think with all of dedication and loyalty everything she does. It really motivates and inspires kids to be as hard working as she is.

Student 7 in the second interview continued, “being more comfortable or confident in what we can accomplish. Because she definitely like I said before she’s a role model for that. I think it shows students how well they can do.” Student 7 in the first interview said, “we did the class together and she was a good person there kind of a good role model I would say for that aspect.”

Student 7 in the first interview stated:

> I think she’s definitely a good role model because I know that she is involved in a lot with the college. And she seems very hardworking with her nursing and very interested in it and you can tell that her knowledge in it is best and so I feel like she definitely tries to just like her being their alone kinda bumps everyone else up. Wants to do well, and yeah.

Student 7 in the first interview noted:

> She took the class with us. And so um she did everything we were doing. She had to do all the assignments everything like that. I would say she was a role model definitely for that class. And also she connected with the teacher communicated with the teacher, so if there were any if there was any confusion with the class or assignment she always found out and um since it was the first time the class was being held and it was first semester freshman year for a lot of us. I think that not everyone was comfortable communicating with the teachers like she was. And so she really stepped in to help people out and showed that they could do it too. So I think she was a really good role model in that area.

Student 7 in the first interview also noted:

> I wouldn’t say she it’s more of like an underlying thing I think. By providing um activities or information about that or supporting the community as a whole kind
of encourages peers to interact um, I wouldn’t say specifically, she doesn’t go around and say ol’ you should hang out with her blab, blab, blah but I think she definitely supports the community. And friendships that way.

Some residents did not come out and directly say Catherine was a role model but provided vignettes of examples that allowed to understand how Catherine was a role model for them. Student 13 explained:

She was she was more of like an organizer sort of person like um, I guess you could say like she kinda was like the round up of like getting people to go to it. And like making sure that like when we had our meeting she was the one who like made sure that everybody went and she um and she would document who couldn’t come for whatever reason and then and then I have like other meetings but I didn’t miss any meetings but I think they had other meetings for people who missed. So, like she was like she was like reporting administration those. And then um she she was sort of like in it with us so she was doing the same sort of stuff. Like she was doing the same activities we were. Which sort of like helped us out a little bit because felt like we have somebody to go to if we had like questions or things like that. She help she would sort of like a mediate uh a communication resource between us and the faculty. Rather than us talking directly to the faculty, we could talk to her and she would relay like what what our concerns were with the faculty faculty that was running it. So it helped out to have have her to make that transition because sometimes it can be like sort of intimidating for like a student to especially a freshmen to like go to a professor and talk to them about something. So, its with her having her to like balance that and allow us to talk to talk to them indirectly helped out that way. She she was just like like sort of like the backbone I guess of the whole thing really.

Student 10 noted:

She does encourage us to do well in in our classes but also like um just like not doing drugs and alcohol. Like we did that class the HEHD 199. We did that together and so in that whenever we were working in groups or whatever we were meeting for that class we would ta talk about you know being as healthy as possible because we are nursing majors and we need to live out what we you know do in our profession. Um, and I guess just along that basis like not drinking and not doing drugs and being healthy and exercising.

Students noted that Catherine was a hard worker in her school work and to HEHD in general. Student 1 in the first interview said, “she is very hard working, and she will
treat you very very respectfully, umm very well and she knows what she is talking about.” Student 11 explained, “since she works hard it kind makes you want to work hard.” Student 11 described Catherine as “hardworking cause I know she does nursing.” Student 2 stated Catherine worked hard at her nursing major and this work ethic was contagious to other as well:

She is a really hard worker I know um, she is a senior nursing major and so it’s a hard major to get into and like she gave me a lot of advice about just different classes we were going to take and um especially different professors that I should choose because she has gone through everything that I am going through right now. And um, yeah she is a really hard worker, like straight A student kind of a person.

Student 7 in the first interview noted:

She’s very hardworking. Dedicated. She definitely I think takes the um goals and the meaning of the college and stuff and really tries to live through that it’s very much who she is I think. She’s a hardworking person, she dedicated to this. She really wants to do well.

Student 6 did not directly state that Catherine was a hard worker but expressed that Catherine worked hard to answer any question student 6 might have asked her:

Well my peer mentor is nice. And um, she’s friendly. Um, I think let’s see well. I mean she’s helpful like if you ever have a question you can come and ask her. That she will do her best to answer your question or you know try to find it out.

Hardworking is the underpinning of Catherine being a role model. Student 7 in the first interview expressed:

I think she’s definitely a good role model because I know that she is involved in a lot with the college. And she seems very hardworking with her nursing and very interested in it and you can tell that her knowledge in it is best and so I feel like she definitely tries to just like her being their alone kinda bumps everyone else up. Wants to do well, and yeah.
Catherine’s hard work provides an avenue to take the residents to the next level or make them strive to be better than they are. Catherine’s hardwork was also noticed by the living-learning community administrator:

Catherine is excellent student and uh it was not uncommon for us to go over to Mauldin as we were going weekly or monthly or whatever and see her studying down in the lobby. Uh and I know that our students saw that. Uh and I know for a fact that not this academic year but last spring she helped many of the nursing freshmen who were struggling in Chem 101. Honestly tutored them. You know was helping them do problems, helping them see things, because several reported back but for her help they would have struggled much more in Chemistry. So definitely from the academic end I mean they don’t get much better than Catherine. Uh she’s a stellar student very conscientious and I know that our students saw that. I know that they saw her going to be early sometimes or studying on a Friday night. And even if that wasn’t their style I think that had a positive impression on them. And I don’t know if we would find another student like that I mean we lucked up in that sense.

Her hard work is one of the characteristics that the students and administrators said made Catherine a role model.

Resource

One of the defining characteristics of both the college mission, the peer mentor position description, and the peer mentor resource manual was emphasizing the importance of being a resource. The living-learning community administrator stated Catherine has “the personability you know again that go to person for students to connect with who’s been there and done that. Uh and has a lot of answers and even if they don’t have the answer is connected to the resources to get our freshmen who are new you may not know connected.”

Students also described Catherine as a person who cared about their personal well being and academic achievement, and she is also someone who was helpful as a resource.
which provided comfort to them. Even if the students had never been to her before they were confident they could go to her for help. Student 7 in the first interview said:

…to me she’s someone to kinda help you out with whatever you need. If you need advice or in the beginning I remember the first meeting we had um kinda for our hall meeting or whatever. She introduced herself and said she was here anytime. Um, if we needed anything she’s been to the hospital with people before. So, I kinda saw her as someone besides the RA that we could go to if we ever needed help or advice or anything.

Student 7 in the second interview said:

I think she’s definitely a resource too because um I think she knows a lot about the college and about program so you can go to her if you have questions about anything. I think she knows a lot about it. But I think that’s part of the mentor aspect and I think that she can be friends with the students but it’s definitely more of a mentor relationship because all uh how do I put this, it’s she because she’s so much more experienced. Because she’s a senior and everything just she’s kinda on a different level than the freshman I would say. And so because of that experience that she has it’s just more of a mentor mentality.

Student 12 stated, “Like the same you know she is really sweet and really helpful.”

Student 12 went on to state how Catherine was a resource, “To um be there for us if we have any questions about you know anything involving academics, or clubs, or personal life issues that kind of stuff.” Student 13 expressed how important it was to know someone was there for them, “it’s just good to know like it’s sort of comforting to know that somebody’s there for you like you if you do need that that help so.” Student 11 explained, “Peer mentor, like Catherine, um, I guess if anybody has a problem they go to her.” The students do not call her a resource all of the time but their stories illuminate how much of a resource she was to the community. Student 7 in the second interview noted:
I would say probably not but at the same time I don’t know how many times people have gone to [Catherine] because I think that probably a lot more people tend to see her than people know about because they might have gone to see her for private reasons. But um overall I would say that people I’m closest to probably haven’t used her as much as they could have.

Student 7 in the second interview also noted:

Just like living away from home. She’s definitely there for just the normal college difficulties when you first get here. And also, just specifically for the HEHD she knows a lot about the college. So, the classes the advisors, she knows personally, I think the teachers she knows a lot of them personally and so she knows how to do well academically but also the opportunities that can present themselves for doing extracurricular activities. I think she knows a lot about that and what would look best after college and help you out specifically with what you are looking for in programs you are looking for. So, she knows how to put it all together and do well.

Student 4 in the second interview expressed Catherine is the first person he goes to in order to ask a question:

I would definitely say she has contributed um I kinda say of all the RAAs I kinda I think of her as almost another RA I didn’t really I didn’t really know exactly what her title was for the longest time. I just called her another RA. Um, she she’s always one of the first people I go uh and and talk to if I have any problems or issues.

Student 13 described Catherine as a person students could go to for information who is a friend resource:

And um it just they they see her more like as a as a friend that they can go to and just kinda like talk to them talk to her and just just get information that they need. It’s just like a friend resource that you can get whatever you want from.

Student 13 when asked about the peer mentor stated:

I would probably just describe it um just like a helpful resource really. Just someone you can go to if you just need that that extra help or like something you just need to find something or you’re having trouble with people on your hall or something, just a resource really more than anything else.
Student 13 then stated, “then um resourceful and able to like give you the information that you need and be able to facilitate what you need more than anything else and they’re there for you.” Student 13 expressed Catherine’s purpose was “honestly to just like get to know us and try to help us out if we need anything really.” The resourcefulness of Catherine was described as helpful.

Student 13 said Catherine was “someone you can go to if you just need that that extra help or like something you just need to find something.” Student 7 in the first interview shared that Catherine can be hard to warm up to but once the students got to know her they realized she desired to help them:

I think she’s also she’s very nice like I said. Um, at times I think she’s it’s a little bit harder to talk to her than would first you would first seem I think but um she’s wants to help you. So, she’s a good person to go to.

Student 12 noted that Catherine was “really helpful in being there for you and always know that if you need someone to talk to there there to guide you through it.” Student 7 in the first interview explained:

She’s um helped to organize a lot between the RAs and the students and always tries to help out if anyone wants to do anything involved in that. She knows what’s going on in the building. She knows the advisors really well. She knows our resident director. So, she definitely involved in everything that goes on and between just the giving out notes or going door to door and telling what’s going on. She always find a way to communicate things and try to get people to go to it and stuff.

Student 10 explained Catherine is “just very helpful.” Student 14 stated Catherine was “willing to help you with anything.” Student 14 expressed, “I guess just to you know if we have any questions about anything she’s there for us. Student 1 in the second interview when describing what the peer mentor’s purpose is said:
if I were to put it in my own words the peer mentor, Catherine, is to kinda provide students with um an accessible person that has gone through what they’ve gone through and uh provide a resource for which they can easily um just talk about situations and previous experiences and kinda pick her mind in order to help them with their transition from college to or high school to college.

As a resource Catherine was able to help the students by answering questions for them. Student 2 expressed:

I was sitting in my uh neighbors room and we were all just hanging out and she came in and started chatting with us. And she was helping um, one of my neighbors move out actually and she was really helpful, um. She knew a lot of the answers about some of the specifics and then she just hung out with us for a while so, it was pretty cool.

Student 6 provided, “she is there we have questions.” Student 4 in the first interview noted, “if I have any questions I can talk to her.” Student 1 in the first interview noted, “definitely to give us, ummm, someone to ask questions too.” Student 1 in the first interview said:

by providing a peer mentor they are trying to give us someone that we can come to with questions uhhh informally. That we can develop relationship with that is not exactly faculty, to student but rather student to student and uhh also someone who has been there with more experience and someone who ummm, is able to say I have been there. And give us a helping hand.

Student 1 in the first interview provided:

…as far as what it’s uhhh trying to accomplish ehhh, I think, by providing a peer mentor they are trying to give us someone that we can come to with questions uhhh informally. That we can develop relationship with that is not exactly faculty, to student but rather student to student and uhh also someone who has been there with more experience and someone who ummm, is able to say I have been there. And give us a helping hand.

Student 6 stated, “I mean she’s helpful like if you ever have a question you can come and ask her. That she will do her best to answer your question or you know try to find it out.”

Student 14 provided, “I guess just to you know if we have any questions about anything
she’s there for us.” Student 10 explained, “they just help you in any way possible and answer any questions that you may have at anytime.” Student 10 noted:

For me anyways, I see her as just like a helper. Um, just because she is in my same major and she is a senior. So she’s been through what I am going through, and so I can ask her questions and um get her feedback on what she thinks is best. And even if I had like homework questions because she’s taken those classes. So she knows what she is talking about.

Student 10 went on to say:

Yeah I’m definitely glad I was put in it. I was kinda mad about it at first because I think we had to pay like 200 dollars extra or something like that. But um I’m definitely glad I was because I’ve met a lot of other nursing students and I’ve got to be under Catherine’s and my RA’s like advising and like if I ever had any issues or questions you know I could go to them and they would really understand what I was talking about. Because their both nursing majors and they’ve been through what I’ve been through.

Student 1 in the first interview stated:

Someone to ask questions too. Someone our age that has been through what we have been through and is able to kind of just give us like huh peer heads up like hey I umm missed this meeting is this really important no. Yeah I don’t like this class, yeah nobody does.

Student 12 expressed:

I had a question about a class that I have to take. That was, she was the first person I ran into asking because she is someone who is close to my age so she can understand where I am coming from with that

Students understood that if they had questions about the classroom or any other university function that they could go to Catherine as a resource.

Some students noted Catherine was there to not only answer questions but also to be a resource or helper in times of concerns or issues. Student 10 said:

I think the purpose of the peer mentor is um to have someone here. Um, just very conveniently um so that we can go and ask her questions anytime. Or even just concerns within our major or within the dorm or like if we have issues within the
dorm. Like even like last night my roommate was getting annoyed because someone on the third floor was playing their music really loud. And so, we went to Catherine and asked her and she went up there and told them to turn it down. So it’s just someone that’s there for you. And anyway possible I guess.

Student 9 stated:

She deals with if you have like I guess like problems with your friend or something you don’t know what to do she will help you. Sometimes if you ask her. I don’t really know many people who go to her.

Student 9 went on to say, “she is someone who’s always there if you need help. At like emotional guidance or something. Or if you’re having a bad day you can go and talk to her. And uh, she’ll guide you.” Student 9 also noted, “if you’re having a problem with another person like she can help you work it out.” Student 6 described:

…when I was feeling kinda bad, um I asked her you know um, like what I should take. Like, like one, one day I had a real bad headache. I remember that. And I asked her should I take um a aspirin pill or a pill like with non-aspirin. Or which one was better. And um, recent well like this two days ago my eye was really red and I was worried that I had pink eye. But I didn’t ask her about that only because my um, my contact had a tear in it and I, I was pretty sure that’s why and that is why but I was you know debatin’ on whether I should go and ask her about it.

Student 7 in the second interview stated she did not use Catherine but knew she was available if student 7 needed her:

I didn’t go to [Catherine] specifically for anything in my two semesters but I would say definitely I knew that she was there if I needed her…. the first semester knowing that Catherine was there in the first few weeks and days of college when the transition was happening um it really helped to see her walking around and saying hi to everyone. And so, So I would say that is really how she most supported me was just being that figure and putting herself out there. And knowing that I it was ok that I had someone to go to really helped.

Student 3 also stated:

She’s, we uh, like we have in our hall way we have decorated it with paper chains that we did for somebody’s birthday and we were um hanging them up in the
hallway like a really tedious process. And we were like there were a whole bunch of girls we were all like micro managing and nit picking at each other. And making comments. And she came out in the hallway sat and just started like talking about like something to totally get our mind off of it and she started like singing and everybody started singing along with her and we had like a little sing off in the hallway and it was just like you live with you know eight girls and like really sick of these people at a certain point. And she always knows when to step in and be like here let’s talk about something different or let’s do something fun.

Not only did students need help from a resource for everyday concerns and issues but also classroom and academic help as well. Student 3 stated:

…like they explained to her at first she was suppose to be like our link between like the HEHD college and like all that is going on there and us. So like if we did not understand something then we would go to her but I think she would even like more as we got to know her better as like an emotional tool. Like This is what you are going to go through your first year as an HEHD student.

Student 6 explained Catherine as “someone who you could come to when you like need help with something like any subject being that we are HEHD.” Student 9 noted that Catherine is there, “to help you if you need help and um I’ve asked her stuff about like scheduling. She was helpful.” Student 10 described:

the most helpful thing that’s like that I’ve gotten out of being a living-learning community is the fact that I have my RA and I have Catherine here that can like help me when I have questions about my schedule or about like different classes that I have have taken or am taking or will be taking.

Student 2 provided that Catherine would, “help you out a lot with academic stuff especially that was the only specific thing she helped me on but I know she has helped um, a couple friends down the hall with other things.” Student 2 said:

We have a pretty good relationship, we are not very close at all because it was um, she just helped me with academics stuff and I actually am not in the dorm a lot of the time because I am involved with a lot other extra-curriculars and that kinda thing. But um, she is really nice and so you know we’re chill.
Student 2 also said:

She helped me a lot with um, scheduling especially. And I had planned on studying abroad when I talked with her last and she helped me in umm, just letting me know what I needed to do inorder to make that happen. Cause for a nursing major especially um we have very specific requirements for courses that we have to fulfill and so like it is a very small window of opportunity that we have too do that. So she was helpful to help me figure that out.

Student 2 finally noted, “you know they really look to her when they need help academically.” Student 10 explained:

Well last semester I was kinda confused about how the whole registration for classes was and uh I um, didn’t know what some of the classes were like cause some of the classes you have an option. Or um like for example, I was trying to choose which um non-lit requirement class to take and I was asking her about the different options because it was kind of confusing in the undergraduate catalog thing. And I was asking her what the different options were and like what class she took and if she enjoyed it. Or if she had heard of anyone else that had taken a different class they liked better. Um, so I feel like that was really helpful because I got to pick the class that I really enjoy now. Now I wasn’t stuck in a class that was not fun.

Student 10 explained:

…they perceive her I think at almost as an equivalent as an RA because she has all those authorities as well. But also um, for me anyways, I see her as just like a helper. Um, just because she is in my same major and she is a senior. So she’s been through what I am going through, and so I can ask her questions and um get her feedback on what she thinks is best. And even if I had like homework questions because she’s taken those classes. So she knows what she is talking about.

Student 9 said, “I’ve [not] really had anything I needed to talk to her about other than scheduling last semester. She was helpful.” Student 9 also stated:

Last semester when I asked her like what classes would be good. Cause I needed other ones that I could take because I’d already filled up a lot of my credit hours, so that are necessary. So, I needed one that maybe I could move forward and she was like she told me like inside like things she would have done if she were me freshmen year. Like and you know made her life easier.
Student 1 in the first interview explained:

...we have a SNA meeting. Like a Student nursing association and uhh I thought it was like an kinda an honors umm association where you had to be at every single meeting and turn in these certain amount of hours so I went to the first meeting and it was grullling. [laugh] It was ummm really long and drawn out and like I really didn’t want to be there so umm afterwards I went to talk to Catherine about it and she was uhh she told me that she never went to any [laugh] one of the meetings. She still is part of the SNA she does stuff with them but you don’t have to go to the meetings so that was definitely one of the examples of how she has kind of helped me out.

Student 1 in the first interview went on to explain:

As far as academic standing umm we’ve talked about classes before ummmm she kind of helped me out in uhh nursing 140 it was where uhh you know where you first get into a class you don’t really know how the test are or what the teacher is like you can do as well as you can but if you don’t do what the teacher wants then you get a bad grade she’s kinda of helped us because she has been through the same classes that we have as far as what the teachers want what we should gear our studying towards and more vocabulary, more concepts. So she certainly umm helped me out at nursing 140 which was a lot of jumping through the hoops.

Student 2 said:

...she helps us a lot with um you know like when we are looking at our schedules telling us you know you might not want to take that many hours or you might not want to take these two classes at once because it would be to much of a work load. That You would not be able to handle and so that really helpful in figuring out you know when we uh need to accomplish certain things.

Student 6 explained:

She was like one of the people we could come to like if we had a question. Oh like I lost my pedometer, so I asked her what I should do and um things like that. She answered question and she was just like. If we had a questions about the class or about one of the challenges we could ask her.

Student 6 also noted:

I would define peer mentor as was someone who you could come to when you like need help with something like any subject being that we are HEHD she went through some of the s., well she’s nursing, I’m nursing. So, She went through everything I’m going through so um and but like the basic classes. I am sure like
most everyone here has to take chemistry. She went through chemistry, biology. She went through biology. So, if we had any questions we come go to her.

Student 6 also stated:

Whenever I have a question I will come and ask her. Um, another thing I asked her about was when it was time for me to do um make my schedule. I asked her like which teacher was the best or which class I should take being that you know she was um, um she is a nursing major.

Student 14 expressed Catherine understood when some issues was over her head and knew when to ask the professional academic advisors for help:

I mean I’ve seen her there was um you know there was someone went to her I mean I just saw this happen from just someone went to her about a problem and that and she you know quickly said you should go talk to your advisor about that. And um, they did. Like we were sitting there eating lunch and the girl went and the her and the advisor went off to another area and have completely diff completely different conversation you know if just with those two.

Student 14 had not been to Catherine before but knew she could go to her for academic help if she needed it by expressing, “I don’t know I mean I feel like if I ever needed help with anything and I went to her she would be willing to help me with school work. But I haven’t gone to her about it.”

Catherine also was a resource for students when it came to the programs planned in the building. Student 11 provided, “well she helps do do some of the programs. And like she helped with we did a pumpkin carving and she was there.” Student 8 noted:

They always have different organizations or different events kind of in the common room. Like we had a FIFA tournament and she had I’m pretty sure she helped out with that. And then we have different meetings where someone maybe in your position that’s coming to do a study. We’ll have a meeting in there and then we will all meet downstairs. And they’ll give their speech about whatever their study is. And then Catherine, I know Catherine helps in the organization. The fact that she’s always there helping that out.
Students also commented on Catherine being a resource by helping with common injuries on the hall or going to the hospital with students. Student 7 in the first interview stated, “But I think I know she’s also been to the hospital this year I think or and she’s helped a lot of people out with injuries or being sick or something like that.” Student 5 explained she was “playing like games on the lawn and I uh, my shoes have no traction and I slipped and got a huge raspberry on my upper thigh, lower buttocks area and she cleaned it up.” Student 6 said:

I know a few times I personally came to her like um being that she is a nursing major, and she’s in her fourth year. Um, when I was feeling kinda bad, um I asked her you know um, like what I should take. Like, like one, one day I had a real bad headache. I remember that. And I asked her should I take um a aspirin pill or a pill like with non-asprin. Or which one was better. And um, recent well like this two days ago my eye was really red and I was worried that I had pink eye. But I didn’t ask her about that only because my um, my contact had a tear in it and I, I was pretty sure that’s why and that is why but I was you know debatin’ on whether I should go and ask her about it.

Catherine was also considered a resource by the students when it came to meeting new people. She would introduce them and provide ways to help students make connections and network. Student 3 explained:

I think, she was really helpful in like the first few weeks. Because I mean you like got to know the girls on your hallway but she was like alright, you need to come out of your room now, let’s go meet people like she would like take people out of their rooms and be like and on like move in day she was like introducing people, and she brought like professors in to help move. She was walking around with a bunch of professors and the dean. And that was like, so you got to know her face and then from there, she was like picking out students from random rooms and being like you know have you to met [laugh]. Like, so like, she kind of allowed us to like she forced us to bridge over into like the different hallways and met people.
Student 8 described:

She does a good job of introducing you to people if you, if you go talk to her and someone comes up. She’ll go hey [Student 8] this is so and so and then you’re just networking like that. She helps with that too for kids because I’m from out of state. I’m from Virginia. So, I don’t, I don’t know I didn’t know anyone actually when I came down to Clemson and Catherine was one of the first people I met and then I met probably 5 or 6 people just in the dorm and maybe around the building too through Catherine just having conversations with her and meeting people.

Student 7 noted:

…well I would say just today had a lunch meeting with our advisors and um just in the lounge here. They had pizza and everything. She was there and we were all just hanging out talking, eating. And she’s definitely someone that makes you feel more comfortable in settings with um college meetings and stuff like that. She’s there I feel like to ease the transition a lot. So that would be one example of where she like brought down the um I don’t know like the official feeling of the meeting. She made it more comfortable.

Students who had not gone to Catherine before knew that she was a resource if they ever needed her. Student 7 in the first interview explained, “I know that if I needed her ever she would definitely be someone I could go to.” Student 13 stated:

I don’t really talk to her that much, I mean I when I see her around I say hi and stuff. But Um I am sure if I if I ever need anything I could go to her and I’m sure there will be like maybe sometime towards like finals or something if I get stressed out or something that I might need to talk to her.

Student 4 stated:

I mean I have never gone to her for any academic help or anything. I am always kinda a very independent person. Um, when it comes to my studies. Um, but I am sure if you needed anything she would probably be one of the first people to go to in this building.

Student 9 stated, “She just she like’s to to help so I guess she she just like’s to be really helpful. And like she tries to be involved even I guess sometimes if you don’t want her too.” Student 9 went on to say,
Well um there’s this girl in nursing …she wanted to drop out so she was like talking to me about it. And I like accidentally said something to her I didn’t want too. And I wanted to go apologize to her but this girl was in a lot of you know like a distraught emotional state. So Catherine was like trying to help her and she did help her. But and then like um I wanted to go apologize to her because I accidentally called her crazy. So, um then Catherine was like no you shouldn’t do that. I was like Catherine this does [not] have anything to do with you.

This story provided by student 9 provides an example where Catherine was trying to help as a resource but where student 9 did not want her involved.

Each characteristic of Catherine contributed to each other. If you remove one characteristic from Catherine then you have a different peer mentor. The importance of the caring characteristic is just as important as the resource characteristic. As noted from the students removing any of these characteristics would have affected the relationship and interactions the students had with Catherine.

Environment

The participants viewed the environment of the living-learning community through different lens. There was a sense of expectation coming into the community about what was going to happen inside and outside the classroom. Students knew the physical environment of the building was going to play a role and come to find out students overall liked living close to their peers and Catherine. Also students talked about transitions, Catherine being available for them, connections made, and their academic milieu. These environments are described below and illustrated in Figure 3.
Figure 3. Environment of the Living-Learning Community

Environment of the Living-Learning Community

- Physical Environment
- Transitions
- Expectations
- Academic Milieu
- Approachability
- Connections
Expectations

The students came into the living-learning community environment with expectations about what they would experience for their first time in college. In general, the students felt the experience was going to consist of a study group, just sign up and not be involved, be able to voice their opinions, living with people of similar majors, and expected community to be built. The participants also had expectations of Catherine, and what their parents thought all contributed to the subcategory of the environment theme. Student 14 noted, “originally when I signed up to live in it I thought I was basically studying signing up for a big study group. And um, that’s part of it.” Student 13 expressed his expectation was to focus on school work and one extracurricular activity:

I don’t have the time to so I just I just I really focus mainly on my school work and lacrosse because those are my two like important things and so if I focus on those two things I figure like the other things will like come in but to play by themselves.

Student 4 in the first interview stated how important it was to live in a community where he could voice his opinions about the daily operations of the community:

I felt like I was able to bring up an important issue with Fike being so far away from Mauldin. Um, it’s kinda hard I, I’m have a very busy schedule and it’s hard for me to work out. Uh, that will hopefully maybe that will spark some interest. Um, I felt like it was, it was a good idea. Um, I feel like you know for the golf management guys it was kinda you know some of the most focused people so maybe golf management guys aren’t the guys to focus on with that. Um, But a lot of the people seem to take it pretty seriously.

Student 12 noted:

Well first of all to bring us together because we have similar interest similar majors and also um to promote health, and health awareness and hopefully spread the word around to the rest of the school.
Student 12 also noted:

Well I definitely since I come from far away I wanted to have a sense of community with people. So that’s what my parents and I talked about and we said this looks like a good idea to do. And actually over the summer at orientation they said oh yeah definitely good to be apart of that for the upcoming year. As a first year student.

Student 11 explained:

I well now I’m a psychology major but I was a health science major. And I figured it would be better to like live with someone that is in my major to like help me out and stuff. And I thought it was a cool concept.

Student 14 when asked about what she would want from the community stated an environment that would pull her out of her shy shell and connect her to her peers:

I like the idea of but with my personality I need the let’s see how I can word this the social life on the in the dorm is not very out going and I need and I’m not very outgoing either and I need other people. I mean it’s not theres nothing wrong with the HEHD program. It’s just I think my experience this year with some of the with some of maybe it’s just the part of the hall I’m living in. I don’t know but um I just need more social an I need a more social environment for me to be comfortable I guess.

The core concepts or six dispositions are the focus of the college. These dispositions were the attributes valued by the college that would create a foundation to prepare students to be professionals in their field of choice. The residents did not know what the core concepts were, but they had expectations of what they should include.

Student 4 in the first interview noted, “the core concepts, Uh I feel like it’s kinda, it kinda brings our college together a little more.” Student 10 said, “well I know there’s si the six I forget what their called but there um. The six core qualities of the HEHD but I don’t remember exactly what they are.” Student 12 expressed, “Well first of all to bring us together because we have similar interest similar majors and also um to promote health,
and health awareness and hopefully spread the word around to the rest of the school.”

Student 9 when asked about the core concepts stated, “is it really bad that I can’t.”

Student 11 stated, “Core concepts? I guess like community. And um promoting health.”

Student 7 in the first interview explained:

I think it really reflects the goals of the college and trying to just live a whole life. And um whether it is reflecting your health. I think it really encompasses everything through general health and mentally and emotionally just like being a good person, being hardworking. And trying to live life fully I guess.

Student 10 explained:

Six core qualities that the HEHD has as a whole and their just kinda brought into the community. I think one of them is like working together and another one’s like um working with um people of other ethnics ethnicities or races um and I feel like you have that in the dorm, so it’s um their kinda implicated or whatever into the LLC.

Students also had an expectation of what Catherine’s role should or would be.

Student 10 noted, “I think the purpose of the peer mentor is um to have someone here. Um, just very conveniently um so that we can go and ask her questions anytime.”

Student 5, who lives on the hall but is not a member of the living-learning community said, “I don’t even know what Catherine does. I, I don’t know where she fits in anywhere.” Student 13 stated, “someone you can go to if you just need that that extra help or like something you just need to find something.” Student 6 expressed:

I guess be probably like offer to you know to tutor us or something. Or like have kinda like a study session. Um, like one night or two nights out of the week. But I guess um well now that I think about it maybe that’s not that possible because I know that my peer mentor she she’s in her clinicals and she has to wake up early so I kinda well I guess I understand why there’s not like how it is but I mean when she is there we have questions
The students were required to take a class the first semester in the LLC. Once students found out about the class they did not know what to expect. However, student 12 noted, “what it felt like was more like taking a health class instead of a community like I thought it would be.”

Students stated that their parents had expectations of the community. The students went along and agreed with their parents. Student 13 explained:

Honesty, my mom. My mom told me my mom my mom thought that it would be better for me because like the way I cause of my academic and like stuff like I focus on that at first and she thought that if I was like in a big dorm then I would all the other distractions would be like on me a lot and for the most part she’s right because um like people in Byrnes and stuff like their doors are always open there’s people coming and going and and in Mauldin like it’s a lot like more settled down and you and the the main thing that I like about it is you you’re not disrupted in your room, like if you want to go in your room and study you can do that rather than like having to like go to the library or something. Because I because there is not like that constant interruption of like people coming and going and it just helps to be able to do it. Like a smaller community like you you see everybody every day and you you get to know that know that them to an extent and it’s just more comforting and I mean if I probably would have done it myself if I knew about it but she she always like she get’s it right usually for what that I need so she she was the reason why I joined it.

Student 3 noted:

And I think it is really interesting like my mom pointed this out to me after a few weeks of living there. She’s like it is amazing because you have like nursing and education and future like Disney employees all working together that they are all like very nurturing. And so that allows like like I don’t know how to phrase it. But they are like nurturing so like coming in as a freshman and living there our personalities are like help us to blossom I guess [laugh]. Cause everybody is like you know already has that let me take care of you kinda thing. So then you are with a whole bunch of them that are all taking care of each other.

Students did not directly state that their expectations were met but the overall feeling from the students can be summarized by the statement from student 4:
I mean to a certain extent college kids are college kids. You can’t really help how rowdy college kids can be sometimes. Um, I say I’m pretty much impressed with the whole, whole system. Um, what can be improved? I feel like I really like the RA last semester and I’m starting to get to know our RA this semester. He’s pretty cool. [Catherine]’s been pretty cool. Um, RD what’s her name Kristin, she’s been pretty cool. I would say it’s all been pretty nice. I mean.

Student’s expectations were generally met. The student’s expectations were defined at the beginning and then changed throughout the year. Students talked about the importance of understanding the expectations. Many of the students talked about transition into college and how expectations changed as the residents grew through the academic year.

Transitions

Students noted several transitions: they know about transitions, high school to college transitions, how transitions affect daily decisions, moving from home transitions, and changing of major transitions. Student 13 said:

I kinda like stay to myself and just deal with my own troubles but I mean like I guess folks just help out people and I know there are people who have hard transitions in college. So I guess it’s just trying to help out with that

Student 7 in the second interview stated the beginning of the year it was a transition living home:

I know for me specifically at the beginning of the year, like the first few days the transition was really difficult and she came by every room multiple times within the first week I would say. And to say hi to students and make sure everything was ok and I it really helped to know that someone was there and someone cared enough to come and check up on you and you could go to and um I think our first meeting with for the girls hall she stood up and said you can come to my room at any hour. I’m here for you. I’ve gotten to the hospital with kids. Like if you need me for anything you can knock on my door. And I think that also made a big big impact to know that any hour you could go and get her for anything.
Student 7 in the second interview also noted:

Just like living away from home. She’s definitely there for just the normal college difficulties when you first get here. And also, just specifically for the HEHD she knows a lot about the college. So, the classes the advisors, she knows personally, I think the teachers she knows a lot of them personally and so she knows how to do well academically but also the opportunities that can present themselves for doing extracurricular activities. I think she knows a lot about that and what would look best after college and help you out specifically with what you are looking for in programs you are looking for. So, she knows how to put it all together and do well.

Students faced transitions from high school to college. Student 8 noted, “it was just kind of the phase from going into high school into college it was that I I really can’t think of a better program than coming through HEHD because everyone’s so friendly.”

Student 1 in the second interview said:

If I were to put it in my own words the peer mentor, [Catherine], is to kinda provide students with um an accessible person that has gone through what they’ve gone through and uh provide a resource for which they can easily um just talk about situations and previous experiences and kinda pick her mind in order to help them with their transition from college to or high school to college.

Student 3 stated:

But at the same time she understands that you know like not everyone is going to get an A in every class. And she wants to make sure you understand that. Cause It’s hard going from high school and being like I was a straight A student to hitting that one class like chem. or something that you can’t get an A in if you spent every day studying all the time. You just don’t get it and she wants you to understand that there is like a middle ground kind of thing.

Student 13 expressed:

It’s just everybody is a freshmen at college and their all trying to figure out what they want to do. And it’s just it’s just helps to be in a small community and it’s it’s definitely looking back on it now like it’s definitely it definitely helped out for my transition into college like that way like I just wasn’t thrown into a huge environment where I didn’t know anybody and was like I I feel like I’m part of like the building here not just like somebody who lives here. I’m like involved and stuff. And people know me
Student 1 in the first interview said:

It’s definitely because we had a class with Kristin, uhhh, all the nursing majors had to take like a CU101 uhhh nursing specific class where uhh Kristin was there she like taught it and led us through workshops and she was and she also emails us and umm was part of the HEHD living-learning community through that big interaction that those test which ummm were a bit confusing at first [laugh] cause when you’re a freshman you have to make like this huge like folder online, you have to go through that and then you have to do library 100, then we have to do get use to living by ourselves and then we have to get use to doing another one hour credit course. So she definitely helped me go through that ummm, one hour credit course.

Student 3 stated:

I think like it’s not like a big event but like at the end of the first semester I liked classes like all of them were like you need to have like everything due like this week. It was like that rush week and you just like I was just on the verge of breaking down. And I was like I can’t handle this like this is so much as a freshman. And like having some people like in my classes and like that lived on my hall and liked they noticed I was like not doing well and I was like not sleeping.

Student 4 in the second interview stated:

[Catherine’s] just kinda been there you know like I said she swings by um, checks up on everyone see how everyone’s doing. Um like like the other I guess a couple of nights ago she was talking I was figuring out what all was going to happen with everyone this summer and next year uh I guess she’s kinda been there to to kinda check on us make make sure everything is going alright. Uh make sure college isn’t overwhelming us I guess.

Student 4 in the second interview also stated:

Well you knew it wasn’t going to be what you expected I had no idea what to expect. Coming from so far away. Um, definitely a lot of culture shock I definitely kinda expected that. Uh everyone always tells you college is a cultural shock you got everyone coming from different uh backgrounds, different morals, different you know your kinda thrown together with no real organization on whos with what and you kinda have to sift through people. Figure out who you are going to hang out with. Um, but it’s been a lot I’ve enjoyed it. Football season last year was a lot of fun. The band kinda got me into a nice place and then it took me a little while to get use to all the golf management guys and figure out
where I should hang out there. Um, but I I would say it is fantastic. I’m I’m really excited about next semester. I’m moving well not that I well not that I don’t like living free now I mean next semester I’ll know who I want to live with why I want to live with them you know um so I’ll be living with people with similar values as me next semester. and then football of course. Will make next semester awesome. National championship.

The living-learning community helps with transitions of the day-to-day life of students. Student 13 noted:

I feel like it it helps you like it helps you sort of transition a little bit and helped you like put into perspective what’s going on and like in your daily life while you’re at college like how how your food like how you deal with food. And like how what you eat and stuff like that like you don’t really think about it when you’re doing it but like if you reflect on it it’s sort of a whole different aspect of it.

Student 2 stated after taking the HEHD 199 class that she made different decisions:

I mean I hated PE all through high school so when I was told we had to run the mile I wasn’t to thrilled about it but I mean I run more now than I did then so you know.

Student 7 expressed:

I think everyone enjoys her being around or um finds her really helpful if they need someone cause like I said before she’s like an extra person to go to. Or I saw her kind of as a transition point from like coming from my family support that she could kind of be in that role as I got more independent at college.

Student 11 said:

I like answer the phones and like now I’m doing like the advising pamphlets like the transcripts and everything for everybody and I just help organize and stuff. And it’s nice because like I get paid so like I can afford to go home for gas and everything.

Students came to the university thinking they were going to major in one thing and changed majors. Student 5 when asked what the living experience has been like living on a hall where her major was different than everyone else’s responded, “probably
just the same as anywhere else because there’s another girl on my hall that is an architecture major so she is not in it either. And it’s not really really noticeable.”

Student 8 noted:

I was in the professional golf management program but I realized after orientation that I wasn’t really gonna want to follow that and I just switched into Parks and conservation area management and I’m actually not really sure if that’s actually want to do. I think I’m going to be switching into graphic communications. But but for now um and for this past two semesters I’ve been great. I mean I love this school work I just don’t know if it’s what I want to go into after this but I like everyone in the building they help me out with getting homework done and stuff trying to.

Student 11 stated:

I well now I’m a psychology major but I was a health science major. And I figured it would be better to like live with someone that is in my major to like help me out and stuff. And I thought it was a cool concept. Psychology. Um well I really interested in health but like I want to counsel. And I decided I like would rather do that.

Student 11 when asked is living in the LLC different now having changed majors responded:

Not really because we like I expected like oh I’m going to live with people in my major we’re going to study together. That didn’t really happen. Like I still made friends with them but it’s not really like study buddies.

Student 8 noted:

I was in the professional golf management program but I realized after orientation that I wasn’t really gonna want to follow that and I just switched into Parks and conservation area management and I’m actually not really sure if that’s actually want to do. I think I’m going to be switching into graphic communications. But but for now um and for this past two semesters I’ve been great. I mean I love this school work I just don’t know if it’s what I want to go into after this but I like everyone in the building they help me out with getting homework done and stuff trying to.
Students expressed they had to make adjustments at the beginning of the year because of all the different events and organizations to get involved with on campus.

Student 12 stated, “well at the beginning of the year there were a ton. Different meetings too she would always try to get us.” Student 12 also noted, “they told us. At the very beginning of the year she told us what she was there for.” Student 5 expressed:

All the people. They you see them everyday. So, and I really like living oh, my halls kinda I guess unique cause like in the beginning they were all everyone was friends on my hall. Like not, not at first but like they became friends every single person.

Student 3 said:

She was really helpful in like the first few weeks. Because I mean you like got to know the girls on your hallway but she was like alright, you need to come out of your room now, let’s go meet people like she would like take people out of their rooms and be like and on like move in day she was like introducing people, and she brought like professors in to help move. She was walking around with a bunch of professors and the dean. And that was like, so you got to know her face and then from there, she was like picking out students from random rooms and being like you know have you to met [laugh]. Like, so like, she kind of allowed us to like she forced us to bridge over into like the different hallways and met people.

Student 6 expressed, “I know like some other things they had um like the first couple of weeks um my RA, she um, like organized a little game…” Student 4 explained, “She kinda helps like I said the first day we moved in uh, she kinda opened up her arms like hey come on in. this, This is, This is a Mauldin. Um, She was very nice.” Student 3 noted:

She I I like I like the first week of school like got the I am 8 ½ hours away from home and I was just like like made me like kinda be like wait I am now 8 ½ hours away and my parents aren’t here and like she like took so much time out of her like schedule and she was so busy with her classes to like check on me everyday and just be like so you know what happened today. Did you talk to your mom? Like to make it easier so like that brought us really close and now she knows she
will pop into my room and we’ll talk about like my life and then her life and what is going on with like her sister and uh she seems like that because we had that first week of bonding.

Student 3 also noted:

I think, she was really helpful in like the first few weeks. Because I mean you like got to know the girls on your hallway but she was like alright, you need to come out of your room now, let’s go meet people like she would like take people out of their rooms and be like and on like move in day she was like introducing people, and she brought like professors in to help move. She was walking around with a bunch of professors and the dean. And that was like, so you got to know her face and then from there, she was like picking out students from random rooms and being like you know have you to met [laugh]. Like, so like, she kind of allowed us to like she forced us to bridge over into like the different hallways and met people.

Student 1 in the second interview noted:

She always works on her desk there whenever she’s uh studying for an exam or anything. Eh from what I understand when she’s studying she’s at that desk near the front door. Um, which was helpful for me to find her the first few weeks because guys weren’t allowed to go on the girl’s floor for the first two weeks.

Student 7 in the second interview stated:

the first semester knowing that Catherine was there in the first few weeks and days of college when the transition was happening um it really helped to see her walking around and saying hi to everyone. And so, So I would say that is really how she most supported me was just being that figure and putting herself out there. And knowing that I it was ok that I had someone to go to really helped.

Physical

The students described their living arrangements in the hall. The focus was on living in the same hall or proximity to the people and Catherine. The position description for the peer mentor stated the peer mentor must “live in [residence hall] in a single room provided to the student by University Housing”. Another focus was the desk where
Catherine was known to be when she was not in class. This was noted in the characteristics theme above.

Living close to the other students and Catherine was noted by the students.

Student 3 said, “I like I think I am close to her [Catherine] because she lives like right down the hall, so I am close to her.” Student 10 noted, “[Catherine] lives in your dorm dorm with you.” Student 10 also noted, “she’s a peer like she lives in in the dorm with me like right down the hall.” Student 12 stated, “I would definitely say getting to know the other people in the community as well. Especially since we all live in the same dorm, definitely nice, to be close by to each other.” Student 1 in the first interview expressed:

Well I like the co-ed part, because I feel the dorms specifically for only female and only male can get a little kind of crazy. I have had six sisters growing up so I know what it is like to live in a house full of women. And umm it can get spiral out of control. Also, I am very glad I am not only in the building with all guys because they can get extremely crazy as well. But ummm, so the co-ed part I really like umm as far as rooming with people who I have had classes with I also really like because I can go anywhere on the second and third floor and know someone that I have had a class with and can chill out and I don’t think I would have had that without the HEHD. But I do know a lot of people in Mauldin that aren’t in the HEHD but it hasn’t done everything but it certainly has helped.

The desk was also mentioned as part of the physical environment. In the residence hall the location of the desk is at the bottom of the stairs right before you come in or leave out the front door. Student 14 noted, “Catherine’s sitting at the desk.”

Student 1 in the first interview noted, “Oh I talk to her a lot. She’s umm has a desk right by the door.” Student 1 in the second interview also noted:

She always works on her desk there whenever she’s uh studying for an exam or anything. Eh from what I understand when she’s studying she’s at that desk near the front door. Um, which was helpful for me to find her the first few weeks because guys weren’t allowed to go on the girl’s floor for the first two weeks.
Student 4 in the second interview said:

I see her a hand full of times a week. Um, whether it’s coming down stairs and she’s always in the lobby uh working on her computer. I always give her a hard time about the project she was working on she’s doing a project with a big board I just told her the colors were clashing. She always got made at me we’d get into an argument of what colors match. Um, yeah and sometimes she’ll swing by I might see her occasionally down the hallway dropping stuff off, usually about four or five times a week. I’d say three or four times a week. Depends on the week and what’s going on.

Student 4 in the second interview continued:

Normally I see her down stairs um, she claims she tries to avoid people around campus. Just because she thinks it kind of kind of where like she goes running she hopes no one sees her running she thinks that’s unprofessional um she was telling me about that and I was like that is no big deal. Um, but yeah I mean she’s down stairs and if you have any questions you want to talk she’s always there to talk to her.

Student 5 stated:

There’s a desk out in the lobby as you walk in. It’s to the right. Um, and she sits there a lot um I guess it’s just like supervise. I, I think all the RAs kinda switch off but not really like I guess you volunteer time. I’m not really sure how it works but Catherine’s there a lot.

Student 4 in the first interview explained, “well it is nice no matter every morning I come down stairs she is always like hey how’s it going. And uh, if I have any questions I can talk to her.” Student 5 stated, “Um, she’s at the desk a lot.” Student 8 expressed, “well Catherine does a great job of putting a smile on your face coming down the stairs because she’s right there going to every class leaving the building, so that’s nice to have someone there.” Student 7 stated:

I’ve seen her around a lot, just in the building and stuff. Cause sitting at the front desk I would say makes a big difference because a lot of times when I’m walking to and from class or just coming in and out of the building she is right there so she’s definitely around a lot.
Student 11 expressed his appreciation for the physical building, “I feel like academically it hasn’t really done anything for me but I know like this dorm is nicer than the other ones. Pretty much I just think the facility is nicer.” The students noticed the physical environment that was created. This understanding by the students can be understood through the environments that were created that were not physical in nature but are aspects of the community to be described by the students.

**Approachability**

The physical environment of Catherine living in close proximity as stated by student 10, “that lives in your dorm dorm with you”, provides context for understanding the environment that has been created where the participants of the community feel like Catherine is approachable and available. Catherine has the characteristic of being available, there is an environment of availability created. Student 1 in the second interview noted:

whenever I um whenever I use to see her by the desk I use to like go and leave for my class a little bit early and um as I was going out the door if I had like a question about say SNA or any of the courses that I was going through like we had this one course called what was it um nursing informatics….Nursing informatics was uh not very good. It It was like a course where you just jump through the hoops. Like you all of our tasks were like open to the internet. And we didn’t really learn anything past like a byte a gigabyte what is the definition between data and knowledge and stuff like that and um it’s a required course for the nursing majors to take so we were all in there and just like listening to lectures that we already knew and that we could look up anyway. And um so, it was kind of a BS course and then like we had like one project like through the whole year that was just like turn in this paper about one topic that interest us and we all turned in this paper and she graded it like really harshly on formatting errors and stuff. And didn’t really do much on the content. So that was it was overall a frustrating course. So I talked to Catherine and she kinda helped me understand the format of how to study for these test in order to make a good grade. How to exactly jump through the hoop. So whenever um that was one of the first
conversations that I had with her was about the nursing 140 class and she went through the same thing and she was like yeah it wasn’t that fun.

Student 4 in the second interview noted:

[Catherine] is more doesn’t really pass us on um she kinda I guess just takes us under her wing. Uh like a couple of nights ago she came in wasn’t my room. I was over in a friend’s room and she came and we was just talking for a couple of hours um maybe it was an hour and 45 minutes I don’t know. Just discussing what’s going on this summer. Uh what’s going to happen. Um, I mean just kinda there I guess we talked to her.

Student 4 in the second interview continued:

I see her a hand full of times a week. Um, whether it’s coming down stairs and she’s always in the lobby uh working on her computer. I always give her a hard time about the project she was working on she’s doing a project with a big board I just told her the colors were clashing. She always got made at me we’d get into an argument of what colors match. Um, yeah and sometimes she’ll swing by I might see her occasionally down the hallway dropping stuff off, usually about four or five times a week. I’d say three or four times a week. Depends on the week and what’s going on.

Student 4 in the second interview also stated:

[Catherine’s] just kinda been there you know like I said she swings by um, checks up on everyone see how everyones doing. Um like like the other I guess a couple of nights ago she was talking I was figuring out what all was going to happen with everyone this summer and next year uh I guess she’s kinda been there to to kinda check on us make make sure everything is going alright. Uh make sure college isn’t overwhelming us I guess.

Student 14 said, “she was upfront and you know willing to help in anyway she could.”

Student 10 stated:

Within the dorm or like if we have issues within the dorm. Like even like last night my roommate was getting annoyed because someone on the third floor was playing their music really loud. And so, we went to Catherine and asked her and she went up there and told them to turn it down. So it’s just someone that’s there for you.
Student 8 expressed:

..well Catherine does a great job of putting a smile on your face coming down the stairs because she’s right there going to every class leaving the building, so that’s nice to have someone there. And um, she kinda goes around the dorms and then she gets a nice one on one. She’ll come to your room sit down on your couch and talk with you for a few minutes. It’s nice having someone like that’s older than us and has more experience at this school talking to us. Maybe get maybe not intentionally giving us advice but giving that one on one like talking experience is nice to hear from someone that has been through the college experience for the most part.

Student 3 explained:

She is like somebody you can go to and like be like I don’t understand this I don’t like here’s like I got an email I don’t know what I am doing. And she’ll like bend over backwards contact people, call people until like you have a good answer and that you are ok like she’s somebody there to like support.

Student 13 noted after asking what is the purpose of the peer mentor, “honestly to just like get to know us and try to help us out if we need anything really.” Student 7 said:

I guess that her being integrated into the community how she’s friends with a lot of students and RAs. And I haven’t found anything like specifically from the peer mentors stand well I don’t know it’s kinda hard to say when the socially I see her more on the same level as anyone else which I would say is a good thing because again she is integrated into the community. So, she can be friends with them and doesn’t always have to bring out the peer mentor title. So, I just see her as another person living in the building kinda from a social standpoint.

Student 3 expressed:

I am close to her because she lives like right down the hall, so I am close to her. Uh, She I like I like the first week of school like got the I am 8 ½ hours away from home and I was just like like made me like kinda be like wait I am now 8 ½ hours away and my parents aren’t here and like she like took so much time out of her like schedule and she was so busy with her classes to like check on me everyday and just be like so you know what happened today. Did you talk to your mom? Like to make it easier so like that brought us really close and now she knows she will pop into my room and we’ll talk about like my life and then her life and what is going on with like her sister and uh she seems like that because we had that first week of bonding. She doesn’t seem like someone distant that’s just there to like I don’t know like sometimes your professors and like people in
HEHD like they seem like distant because like I had that personal level built with her right away she’s like I consider her like a friend.

Student 13 noted:

I don’t really talk to her that much, I mean I when I see her around I say hi and stuff. But Um I am sure if I if I ever need anything I could go to her and I’m sure there will be like maybe sometime towards like finals or something if I get stressed out or something that I might need to talk to her. But I mean it’s just good to know like it’s sort of comforting to know that somebody’s there for you like you if you do need that that help so.

Student 4 in the first interview explained:

…well it is nice no matter every morning I come down stairs she is always like hey how’s it going. And uh, if I have any questions I can talk to her. And uh, she’s a nursing major. I broke my wrist actually last semester. So, she kinda talked with me about it. And um, she great kinda have someone down stairs to kinda talk to. Really nice.

Student 4 in the first interview also explained:

The one that sticks out in my mind is when uh, I went down stairs and she was wondering what happened to my wrist and uh so I got my bone stimulator which is uh how I help heal it faster and was showing her all the nics and crannies of it. We kinda just talked for about 20 minutes about you know how’s life how’s college going. It was pretty nice.

Catherine would come around the hall and leave a note, say hi, or wish students luck for no reason. These actions helped create the environment that Catherine was there for the students. Student 7 stated, “just throughout the year she has come by rooms for different reasons whether it’s to talk about a program or just say hi or give little goody bags for whatever reason so.” Student 7 in the second interview stated, “I have interacted with her a lot when she comes around to the different doors, or if we do programs and stuff.” Student 4 in the second interview when asked how Catherine is caring he stated:

She always gives everyone cards for their birthday…. Um, she always comes by uh like before finals and gives us like little care package or uh she always leaves
like little sticky notes on the door you know like good luck this week you’re half way there I just kind of reminders.

Student 10 said:

I know she encourages us a lot like. I’ll come back to my room and I’ll have like a note like sticky note on my door. Or like it’s the week before finals don’t be stressed. If you need any help come, see me. Um, or just notes like under the door or like candy stuck to the door. It’s like so she’s been very encouraging through that.

Student 8 provided:

They like Catherine. I, I can’t really think of any times. Maybe people will say man like I’m doing work right now and she’ll come by and knock on the door and ask for something. But usually when she knocked on the door you open the door and it’s Catherine she’s like offering you a cookie. Or she or something great that I really love about Catherine is she always comes around your room when it’s like mid terms or finals or something. And she puts a little sticky note like on your door. That says like good luck on finals then she’ll sign it like herself. I’ve seen her walk around doing them individually like by herself. It’s nice to get that little, instead of having to print out a copy. She goes by and does like hand hand written so it feels like it means something.

Student 7 in the first interview stated:

She’s um helped to organize a lot between the RAs and the students and always tries to help out if anyone wants to do anything involved in that. She knows what’s going on in the building. She knows the advisors really well. She knows our resident director. So, she definitely involved in everything that goes on and between just the giving out notes or going door to door and telling what’s going on. She always find a way to communicate things and try to get people to go to it and stuff.

Student 4 in the first interview noted:

I feel like you know there’s also those times she she always puts up sticky notes up on our doors like have a great week. Um, something along, once she came around with cookies. Just seems to bring us kinda closer together keep us more…

Catherine stops by rooms to just hang out or chat with the residents. Student 2 said:

I was sitting in my uh neighbors room and we were all just hanging out and she came in and started chatting with us. And she was helping um, one of my
neighbors move out actually and she was really helpful, um. She knew a lot of the answers about some of the specifics and then she just hung out with us for a while so, it was pretty cool.

Student 8 noted:

One room up on the third floor that we kinda call the man cave because it has the two lazy boys in it. Whenever you get the chance to relax you can go in there and sit down and play x-box or just hangout with friends for a little bit. And she comes in often and then she’ll just sit and talk with us when there’s like five or six of us in there. And it’s nice to get that interaction again like I said before was just nice like getting to know people like that in the building.

Even the residence hall administrator stated

…she also with the role she was definitely an encourager with the students like I always saw notes on the door. Like good luck with your exams, happy birthday, she was always doing things like that. And so I feel like the role of the peer mentor was to be available and present within the community. And to be a help and support.

The students know Catherine is there for them if they need her. Student 13 provided:

I am sure if I if I ever need anything I could go to her and I’m sure there will be like maybe sometime towards like finals or something if I get stressed out or something that I might need to talk to her.

Student 6 stated:

I would define peer mentor as was someone who you could come to when you like need help with something like any subject being that we are HEHD she went through some of the s., well she’s nursing, I’m nursing. So, She went through everything I’m going through so um and but like the basic classes. I am sure like most everyone here has to take chemistry. She went through chemistry, biology. She went through biology. So, if we had any questions we come go to her. I know a few times I personally came to her like um being that she is a nursing major, and she’s in her fourth year. Um, when I was feeling kinda bad, um I asked her you know um, like what I should take. Like, like one, one day I had a real bad headache. I remember that. And I asked her should I take um a aspirin pill or a pill like with non-aspirin. Or which one was better. And um, recent well like this two days ago my eye was really red and I was worried that I had pink eye. But I didn’t ask her about that only because my um, my contact had a tear in it and I, I
was pretty sure that’s why and that is why but I was you know debatin’ on whether I should go and ask her about it.

Students continued to note Catherine’s approachability. Understanding Catherine as caring, having a positive attitude, an encourager, a peer, and experienced along with being available provides a lens to understanding how the students perceived the approachable environment created by Catherine. Student 2 stated, “You know you can talk to her just about the college experience and um, in general and she is pretty approachable.” Student 1 in his second interview said, “she’s been a resource but I classify her as a more of a an approachable person that I would come up and ask any time which is I would say more friendly than resource.”

Student 7 in the second interview stated:

I know for me specifically at the beginning of the year, like the first few days the transition was really difficult and she came by every room multiple times within the first week I would say. And to say hi to students and make sure everything was ok and I it really helped to know that someone was there and someone cared enough to come and check up on you and you could go to and um I think our first meeting with for the girls hall she stood up and said you can come to my room at any hour. I’m here for you. I’ve gotten to the hospital with kids. Like if you need me for anything you can knock on my door. And I think that also made a big big impact to know that any hour you could go and get her for anything. And let’s see um I don’t know just throughout the year she has come by rooms for different reasons whether it’s to talk about a program or just say hi or give little goody bags for whatever reason so. She’s definitely made herself approachable and put herself out there to know that she’s here for us.

Some of the students did not come out and directly say that Catherine was approachable but examples were provided. The approachability comes from friendly encounters where students felt comfortable interacting with Catherine because of her ‘hellos’ or location. Student 8 said, “whenever I do we always have a we always share a joke or something like that. She’s easy, she’s real easy to talk to. She’s real friendly.”
Student 4 in the first interview noted:

Every morning I come down stairs she is always like hey how’s it going. And uh, if I have any questions I can talk to her. And uh, she’s a nursing major. I broke my wrist actually last semester. So, she kinda talked with me about it. And um, she great kinda have someone down stairs to kinda talk to. Really nice.

Student 3 explained being calm and a good listener were helpful qualities that Catherine possessed to be approachable:

…she’s very calm first of all because she’s like dealing with a lot of people and a lot of different questions at once. She is very calm, um, She’s very like understanding like she’s uh great listener.

Student 6 expressed:

Well my peer mentor is nice. And um, she’s friendly. Um, I think let’s see well. I mean she’s helpful like if you ever have a question you can come and ask her. That she will do her best to answer your question or you know try to find it out.

Student 10 explained:

Just very helpful, very personable. Um, I guess patient. With since there are a lot of questions. Um, very intelligent. I mean because she is very knowledgeable about nursing because she is a senior in the nursing um major.

Students gave examples of the approachability of Catherine. The foundations of Catherine’s approachability was connected to her being caring, having a positive attitude, encouraging, being a peer, having experience and being available. Students felt that they could approach her because of these other qualities.

Catherine created an environment where the students in the living-learning community knew they could ask her a question or visit and talk with her. The way Catherine provided smiles, hellos, visiting rooms, and being available by the door allowed for an environment to be created where residents knew Catherine was approachable.
Connections

In students day-to-day lives, they stated the importance connections played.

Students made connections with peers whether it be a roommate, someone of the same major, or of even someone from a different background. The involvement within the community through planned activities or connections to the community at large was the environment the students spoke of. Several students stated they looked after themselves and did not rely on Catherine or other students. Finally, academic connections were mentioned by the students. Student 14 stated her most significant experience was “getting to know the people I am living with…” Student 13 explained:

I don’t know if it’s that much of a big deal with academics but I think it’s more of when as she like makes you feel more secure in like the environment like the college environment you if you feel better than you’ll perform better on like test and things and you can you your more comfortable like doing your work and it helps you like if your if your calm and accepting everything like in the community then you then you accept it and you can calm down and focus on stuff better. So it, so it helps in that way I guess but not like directly academically.

Student 4 in the first interview shared, “the core concepts, Uh I feel like it’s kinda, it kinda brings our college together a little more.” Student 4 in the first interview went on to share:

Well I mean I haven’t had very many classes outside of the golf management classes with guys in golf management. I don’t know how that worked out um, we are all suppose to take very similar courses. Um, But outside of a couple of lecture halls and the actual PRTM courses uh, so I can’t really attribute it to the classes, um, I would say just day in and day out you wake up in the morning and so and so has an eight o’clock class too and both just stumble around the building. Um you kinda get to know each other or feel like hey I got a movie invite a couple of guys across the hall. Um, so I feel like the learning community is what helped bring us together and of course you know we had a PGA meetings, um, which are only maybe once every two to three weeks which also help bring us together. But, um, I would say living-learning helped quite a bit.
Student 13 expressed:

I think she’s just like with all the things that she does just like running all the um I don’t what you call them activities and things that we have like in the hall. She just brings everybody together like I said earlier just like brings everybody together and lets them puts them like in a comfortable environment so where they can like their they can branch out and like meet other people that are instead of like being fort of like nervous and its its an easier transition when your comfortable with talking to people and she kinda makes that easier.

Student 8 noted:

And coming to a um this dorm specifically and the college how it’s all it’s a lot more face to face. There aren’t a whole lot of emails you have to send out because people are always around the building you can just see someone and say hey I was going to shoot you an email but now I don’t have to cause we’re all in everyone’s in nice nice quarters. Like some people might think it’s tight quarters but it’s a small amount of people. So it’s good to like have a better personal relationship with kids going through the same thing you’re going through freshman year.

Student 12 when asked about most significant experience stated, “I would definitely say getting to know the other people in the community as well. Especially since we all live in the same dorm, definitely nice. To be close by to each other.” Student 3 stated:

I just think it’s like I remember when I was talking I have friends who were looking at coming to Clemson. And the biggest thing I said to them was find a living-learning community. Like, It’s like the best decision. Because I was kinda like I signed up for it kinda hesitant and now I have like the friends I know I have made friends within this community that will last me through the next four years. Like my RA, like I mean she’ll be around like she cares so much about us. Like Catherine I plan on keeping contact with her. Like I just think it is so important for like freshman to like understand what a living-learning community is more because it’s kinda like a it’s like another college topic that you never really grasped like living with like what the positives are of it and like at orientation they breeze over it. So I wish like more freshman would just like this is a really good decision. Cause then, I just think they would understand that.

Even the administrators commented on the connections that Catherine help create. The residence hall administrator talked about the side of the hall Catherine lived on “was a
very tight knit community that little wing and so she was part of that community and was there and present”. The living-learning community administrator gave an example of Catherine coming to her with an idea to bring the community together:

...she said you know I want to do something for their birthdays, the first birthday away from home. And you know we talked it through in here this is what she needed you know and she just took the torch and and came up with the idea and told us what she needed and told us what she was going to do and then put it in place. Um and we didn’t really have to worry about it. But you know and again I was like that’s one of those things where I don’t know if I would have necessarily thought of you know my first birthday away from home, spending it away. You know but she made it a big deal for the residents and it and it became more of just celebrating one person’s birthday. It became more of people coming together.

The living-learning community administrator provided insight into how Catherine fostered connections:

...well I guess it’s not a program but she’s done some initiatives like having uh uh Monday lunch with student’s who were interested. So um you know in that sense I think she does connect uh students in in that way and she’s she was always very in tune with the student who maybe an outlier reaching out to them trying to bring them in, trying to make connections um if the student was struggling with something.

**Relationship**

The relationships that were created between the students and Catherine have to be viewed through the lens of the characteristics and the environment students lived. The relationship between the students and Catherine were made possible because of the individual characteristics of Catherine as well as the environments that surround the living-learning community either physical or other. The living-learning community administrator described Catherine as a person who put others before herself to help build relationships and gave this example:
…she said you know I want to do something for their birthdays, the first birthday away from home. And you know we talked it through in here this is what she needed you know and she just took the torch and and came up with the idea and told us what she needed and told us what she was going to do and then put it in place. Um and we didn’t really have to worry about it. But you know and again I was like that’s one of those things where I don’t know if I would have necessarily thought of you know my first birthday away from home, spending it away. You know but she made it a big deal for the residents and it and it became more of just celebrating one person’s birthday. It became more of people coming together.

Students described their connection to Catherine as five different types of relationships.

Catherine was described as a family member, a friend, a resource, reminded students of their RA, or she had no impact on the participants at all.

**Family**

Students described their relationship to Catherine as familial. Student 1 in the first interview said, “they like her they don’t dislike her ummm they kind of treat her like a big sister really and she ummm treats them like little brothers.” Student 1 in the first interview in reference to Catherine’s interaction with other peers said she is “just kind of like a big sister to them.” Student 1 in the first interview after explaining the familia relationship stated, “I would make fun of her because she is extremely conservative and so easy to kind of poke at.” Student 8 stated:

She does a good job of getting everyone to like kinda have a bit of a bonding. Cause this is a smaller dorm for freshmen than the other ones. So it’s easier to get more of a one on one relationship with few people than having to just to have a bunch of acquaintances. Cause we’re only here, it’s just, it’s kinda like a big house pretty much because there aren’t that many people here.

Student 7 in the first interview noted:

I think everyone enjoys her being around or um finds her really helpful if they need someone cause like I said before she’s like an extra person to go to. Or I saw her kind of as a transition point from like coming from my family support that she could kind of be in that role as I got more independent at college.
The living-learning community administrator described how she heard the students
describe Catherine:

Honestly, I get a lot from students that they look at her like a mama. Like a
mother figure. You know and yeah so. That’s she and I do and I know she’s the
go to person for for a lot of them with problems. Um you know when some
they’ll go to her first and that’s a good thing.

**Friend**

Students described Catherine as a friend. Student 1 in the second interview
stated, “she’s been a resource but I classify her as a more of a an approachable person
that I would come up and ask any time which is I would say more friendly than
resource.” Student 4 in the second interview noted:

Catherine is more doesn’t really pass us on um she kinda I guess just takes us
under her wing. Uh like a couple of nights ago she came in wasn’t my room. I
was over in a friend’s room and she came and we was just talking for a couple of
hours um maybe it was an hour and 45 minutes I don’t know. Just discussing
what’s going on this summer. Uh what’s going to happen. Um, I mean just kinda
there I guess we talked to her.

Student 4 in the second interview when asked to characterize Catherine also noted:

I would say a friend. You know I’m always have the idea that you should make
friends and then asked them after like use them after you I guess that doesn’t quite
sound right but. Um, I’ve never I don’t think I’ve ever really had to ask anything
from her. Um but I’m sure if there’s a situation that arises where needed her
assistance I’m sure she would be one of the first people I go too. Um, I do know
she did give some guys advice the other day on what kind of dog they should get.
I don’t know if that’s under her job description but she did a good job of
describing what they needed since apparently she use to breed dogs.

Student 4 in the second interview continued:

I see her a hand full of times a week. Um, whether it’s coming down stairs and
she’s always in the lobby uh working on her computer. I always give her a hard
time about the project she was working on she’s doing a project with a big board I
just told her the colors were clashing. She always got made at me we’d get into
an argument of what colors match. Um, yeah and sometimes she’ll swing by I might see her occasionally down the hallway dropping stuff off, usually about four or five times a week. I’d say three or four times a week. Depends on the week and what’s going on.

Student 4 in the second interview went on to say:

Normally I see her down stairs um, she claims she tries to avoid people around campus. Just because she thinks it kind of kind of where like she goes running she hopes no one sees her running she thinks that’s unprofessional um she was telling me about that and I was like that is no big deal. Um, but yeah I mean she’s down stairs and if you have any questions you want to talk she’s always there to talk to her.

Student 3 said:

I think I am close to her because she lives like right down the hall, so I am close to her. Uh, She I I like I like the first week of school like got the I am 8 ½ hours away from home and I was just like like made me like kinda be like wait I am now 8 ½ hours away and my parents aren’t here and like she like took so much time out of her like schedule and she was so busy with her classes to like check on me everyday and just be like so you know what happened today. Did you talk to your mom? Like to make it easier so like that brought us really close and now she knows she will pop into my room and we’ll talk about like my life and then her life and what is going on with like her sister and uh she seems like that because we had that first week of bonding. She doesn’t seem like someone distant that’s just there to like I don’t know like sometimes your professors and like people in HEHD like they seem like distant because like I had that personal level built with her right away she’s like I consider her like a friend.

Student 7 in the first interview said:

I think very positively overall. Uh, I know there are people that have gone to her definitely and there are a lot of students who have a stronger connection to her. And I’ve seen her talking with them hanging out. I’ve seen her with RAs a lot um, She’s friends with a lot of people.

Student 8 noted, “whenever I do we always have a we always share a joke or something like that. She’s easy, she’s real easy to talk to. She’s real friendly.” Student 1 in the second interview explained he saw Catherine as:
…more of a friend than a resource cause I think it’s the fact that I live with her I would like whenever you live in the same building as someone you get to see like their relaxed side their normal side as well. And instead of like their business face. So that’s probably what would make her choose her as a resource. Like I see like my academic advisor as a resource where as Catherine is we make fun of her all the time.

Student 1 in the second interview expressed, “I don’t really look at her as with a title cause I don’t know she’s just [Catherine].” Student 1 in the first interview said, “Negative. Not really no. umm All of my interactions are extremely formal and nice. I mean umm the most negative thing is I would make fun of her because she is extremely conservative and so easy to kind of poke at.” Student 1 in the first interview said, “So its, really gives us someone we can easily relate too who is not a uh figure that can get us in trouble.” Student 1 in the first interview also said, “And as far as the girls go I think they all pretty much like [Catherine]. She’s, she’s good.” Student 7 in the first interview explained:

I guess that her being integrated into the community how she’s friends with a lot of students and RAs. And I haven’t found anything like specifically from the peer mentors stand well I don’t know it’s kinda hard to say when the socially I see her more on the same level as anyone else which I would say is a good thing because again she is integrated into the community. So, she can be friends with them and doesn’t always have to bring out the peer mentor title. So, I just see her as another person living in the building kinda from a social standpoint.

Student 13 stated:

I know everybody like likes her a lot. And um it just they see her more like as a as a friend that they can go to and just kinda like talk to them talk to her and just just get information that they need. It’s just like a friend resource that you can get whatever you want from.

Student 13 noted:

…she just like looks into into like what you what you want. And she cares about like how your doing. And she’ll check up on you and stuff and she she just
wants you to have the best experience that you that you can have. And try to make it like as flawless as possible.

Student 10 stated:

She’s a peer like she lives in in the dorm with me like right down the hall. Like she’s going to Clemson just like I am and like I like that makes it like to where we have a lot in common. So it gives you that common ground.

When student 2 was asked if she knew of any negative interactions Catherine had had with other people, Student 2 said, “You know, so far I do not know anyone that doesn’t like her.” Student 13 stated, “I know everybody like likes her a lot.” Student 8 noted, “everyone for the most part likes, they like [Catherine]. I, I can’t really think of any times [where people have not liked Catherine].” Student 9 provided, “But the most part I think everyone likes her.” Student 2 explained, “I know that my neighbors really like her as well.” Student 4 stated, “well it is nice no matter every morning I come down stairs she is always like hey how’s it going. Student 4 expressed, “they they all seem to kinda think she is really cool. Um, I have never heard anyone really say anything negative about her.” Student 13 had not had a negative interaction with Catherine. Student 2 said, “She knew a lot of the answers about some of the specifics and then she just hung out with us for a while so, it was pretty cool….I have a friend that lives next door to her and she thinks she is pretty cool too.”

A friend is a person who encourages someone by coming by to visit or giving someone a pick me up that is not expected. Student 8 expressed:

When she knocked on the door you open the door and it’s Catherine she’s like offering you a cookie. Or she or something great that I really love about Catherine is she always comes around your room when it’s like mid terms or finals or something. And she puts a little sticky note like on your door. That says like good luck on finals then she’ll sign it like herself. I’ve seen her walk around
doing them individually like by herself. It’s nice to get that little, instead of having to print out a copy. She goes by and does like hand hand written so it feels like it means something.

Student 2 said:

I was sitting in my uh neighbors room and we were all just hanging out and she came in and started chatting with us. And she was helping um, one of my neighbors move out actually and she was really helpful, um. She knew a lot of the answers about some of the specifics and then she just hung out with us for a while so, it was pretty cool.

Student 8 noted:

She kinda goes around the dorms and then she gets a nice one on one. She’ll come to your room sit down on your couch and talk with you for a few minutes. It’s nice having someone like that’s older than us and has more experience at this school talking to us. Maybe get maybe not intentionally giving us advice but giving that one on one like talking experience is nice to hear from someone that has been through the college experience for the most part.

Resource

Not only did Catherine have a characteristic of being a resource where the students saw her as a resource and knew they could go to her for questions. There was an environment created where the students viewed the peer mentor as a person where a relationship or connection was created that allowed for them to ask questions. Student 3 stated:

She’s a sweetheart. She is like somebody you can go to and like be like I don’t understand this I don’t like here’s like I got an email I don’t know what I am doing. And she’ll like bend over backwards contact people, call people until like you have a good answer and that you are ok like she’s somebody there to like support you because you as a freshman you don’t have all the answers.

Student 1 in the first interview explained:

By providing a peer mentor they are trying to give us someone that we can come to with questions uhhh informally. That we can develop relationship with that is not exactly faculty, to student but rather student to student and uhh also someone
who has been there with more experience and someone who ummm, is able to say I have been there. And give us a helping hand.

Student 2 stated, “You know you can talk to her just about the college experience and um, in general and she is pretty approachable.” This makes Catherine be viewed as a resource but is more than just a characteristic but there is a relationship between the residents and the peer mentor, Catherine.

**Reminds of an RA**

Students noted that Catherine reminded them of the RAs on the floor. Student 4 in the second interview noted:

I would definitely say she has contributed um I I kinda say of all the RAs I kinda I think of her as almost another RA I didn’t really I didn’t really know exactly what her title was for the longest time. I just called her another RA. Um, she she’s always one of the first people I go uh and and talk to if I have any problems or issues.

Student 4 in the second interview continued to say, “peer advisor, ok getting all the titles mixed up. Uh, it’s all kind of semantics I guess, um. Peer advisor peer Overseer. That’s not the direct connotation.” Student 7 in the first interview stated:

To me she’s someone to kinda help you out with whatever you need. If you need advice or in the beginning I remember the first meeting we had um kinda for our hall meeting or whatever. She introduced herself and said she was here anytime. Um, if we needed anything she’s been to the hospital with people before. So, I kinda saw her as someone besides the RA that we could go to if we ever needed help or advice or anything.

Student 8 said, “she pretty much acts as act acted as one of the RAs in a sense. Um she would there would be certain group leaders who were not, who I don’t see around the building as much but I see them in the events in in the common room but not the RAs.”
Student 2 when asked about Catherine, the peer mentor, stated, “Do you mean my
resident advisor?” Student 3 explained:

Specifically in my hall we don’t like see her like a lot of people I know see her
like an RA. Like another like authoritative figure to tell us do this, don’t do that
like you know kind of watch over our shoulder and I don’t really feel like she is
doing that I feel like she is a student who is just on our hall that happens to be
older and happens to have the book of wisdom like she like isn’t she not there to
be like you know your breaking a rule don’t do that. I mean like she steps in
when she has too and when something getting out of control I see more like just
another student. Just happen to be here longer than us

Student 6 said she had a better relationship with her RA:

I will say I am more I have a a better relationship with I guess my RA. I will say
because she like she is always asking us do we want to go eat and things like that.
But um, I don’t have a bad relationship with my peer mentor.

Students listed both RAs and other community members as unofficial peer
mentors within the community. Student 3 noted:

I mean in a way like the other girls on my hallway have become mentors.
Because we all have our moments where we like hit rock bottom and there and
then like they step in and kinda act like little Catherine’s. like I don’t know like
they there like they know what to say because she has helped them. And they are
like lets talk about this. So like I think in a way like we have all had a point where
we have had to be like ok let’s channel our inner Catherine. Let’s see what’s
wrong. And like that you know is cause she’s helped us and it is our turn to help
somebody else

Student 1 in the first interview expressed:

We’re all uhh pretty pretty equal, I’m umm actually the male nurse, uhh the only
male nurse on the HEHD. Uhh, as far as the golfers go their all like kinda like a
frat so I am not sure if they have had to distinguish a peer mentor ummm. But I
uhh wouldn’t be able to indicate that. Uhh as far as the nurses go we’re all pretty
equal.

Student 11 said, “Unofficial? Our is my RA considered a peer mentor’?... Yeah I consider
her and Kristin but I guess they’re both kinda official.” Student 9 explained “my RA.
And I guess the other female RA. And and I don’t really know anyone else.” Student 8 stated:

Actually last semester I had the best RA. I like my RA now but last year last semester he was the man. He’s in Thailand right now actually studying abroad. But um, it was awesome having him because I have two friends, Brian Keefe and Ryan Barne, who are also on my floor. And Josh was kind of like the fourth guy. He that was my RA last fall. He was just a He was like the 4th guy in the group. He would come in and sit with us and talk with us. Like it wasn’t a relationship where you would be like afraid of the RA like if your doing something bad. We weren’t doing anything bad of course. But people will sometimes think of an RA that’s like a parent. And you’re like I’ve gotten away with my parents, I don’t want someone here telling me what to do. But he was like. He was real down to earth. And he was, he was a friendly guy. So it was real nice having someone like that to transition in.

Student 10 when asked about unofficial peer mentors asked after a long pause, “I don’t know that there are any?” Student 14 explained:

Well our RAs are definitely. My RA is definitely. The one person that stands out in my mind when you said that um but you mean like other people that live on the hall. Um, I mean several people some people are in different areas and they know different things about different ways and if I need to go to them about a situation in one area I might go to one person and in another area I go to another person. So I don’t know if there is any one person that stands out.

Student 4 in the first interview stated:

I felt like last semester our RA uh who is now on a off somewhere around the world, I don’t even know. He was, He kinda help bring our hall together. Uh, we would always go out to Schiletter and eat with him. Um, I don’t know on football weekends you know he, he would go hangout with some of the guys. I couldn’t because I am in the band. Um, weekends we would all walk to subway or something like that. Um, other unofficial peer ministers, I feel like he is kinda the main one in this living, in this community.

Student 2 expressed:

I mean my neighbor Rachel she’s um she transferred actually but she was way more involved than I think the rest of us were even in that HEHD class and um. She was really into it and sometimes she would get me to go running with her and that kind of thing. She was really cool.
Student 5 said:

My roommate is amazing at giving advice. So I mean, I talk to her about everything. I know that there are a few people on our hall that does the same thing. So if anybody I’d figure her.

Student 13 noted:

I guess RAs kinda help out a lot but its they basically are like the peer mentors of like a smaller group like the whole floor like a floor instead of like the whole building. And um, I mean I honestly don’t even think we have an RA on my floor right now like on my part of the floor right now. So I don’t really have a relationship with my RA but I know like RAs are really helpful with like a roommate troubles and stuff like that. So, cause a lot of people I know have had like problems like that and its just good help to have them to like a mediator or sort of deal with that.

Student 7 in the first interview said, “I would say our RAs definitely are our peer mentors too because they also have the role of like being friends with the students but also are there to go too.” Student 12 when asked about the unofficial peer mentors stated, “I would say the RAs.” Student 6 stated:

Well our RAs I would say. Because well I mean well my RAs a nursing major too so I can ask her anything. And she um, she al she well my RA. She’ll advise me to take um women studies for my knowledge requirement. And I am taking it. And well I real right now I have to ask her a question about we have a final project and being that she already took the class, I want to see like what like you know what topic she did cause I kinda don’t have an idea. Um, yeah I think like our RAs really can be considered peer mentors too.

Each student had something different to say about what they thought other people thought about Catherine. Student 10 stated, “they perceive her I think at almost as an equivalent as an RA because she has all those authorities as well.” Student 5 expressed:

Well it’s the RAs which are in charge of the hall. And they have uh, both sides they two different halls and um then I guess it’s Catherine cause she’s above the RAs. And but it’s kinda weird just cause there is only one of her. And she’s on, like there’s no other hall has some uh, she’s a PA I think. Peer Advisor? No, No
other hall hall has a Peer Advisor and stuff for ours, so. I am not really sure. And then I guess her, and then Kristin as an RD which just like rules everyone.

Some students noted they did not observe any disagreements between the RAs and Catherine. Student 2 expressed, “I don’t know if they work closely with each other but I have never seen them have any sort of disagreement.” The residents saw similarities between the RAs and Catherine. Student 7 summed it up in the first interview by:

She’s um helped to organize a lot between the RAs and the students and always tries to help out if anyone wants to do anything involved in that. She knows what’s going on in the building. She knows the advisors really well.

**Authority Figure**

Student 10 explained, “she is sort of like an RA. Like she does have those authorities and she does enforce rules but I mean that’s not necessarily negative like that’s could yeah that’s a good thing.” Student 10 we on to say that other students, “perceive her I think at almost as an equivalent as an RA because she has all those authorities as well.” Student 4 in the first interview said, “she kinda handles things when our hall gets a little rowdy. She’s, she’s always out there like taking care of business. It’s happened multiple times last semester, um, she gets the job done it seems like.”

Student 4 in the first interview stated, “though people you know sometimes they will grumble. Like oh, you know this authority figure when we’re all freshman.” Student 13 said, “someone you can go to if you just need that that extra help or like something you just need to find something or your having trouble with people on your hall.” Student 4 in the first interview said, “she is kinda the person that uh almost seems like she is charge, without being the RD.”
Student 1 in the second interview noted:

But, from what I understand she has certainly keep her role as kinda like almost an RA. Of someone who is responsible for you know maintaining order. With the golfers especially, um I am not sure to the extent of that.

Student 4 in the first interview expressed:

She helps keep us inline. Um, I’ll say the one night, well, well the first night we were here uh, we were suppose to have a meeting and we’re all, all the PGA guys watching the PGA championship and uh, she came in and was like hey no more PGA championship we have got, we got to go, this is important. Um, she kinda seems to put us, put us into action whenever we need, when we’re a little out of line.

Student 3 explained:

A lot of people I know see her like an RA. Like another like authoritative figure to tell us do this, don’t do that like you know kind of watch over our shoulder and I don’t really feel like she is doing that I feel like she is a student who is just on our hall that happens to be older and happens to have the book of wisdom like she like isn’t she not there to be like you know your breaking a rule don’t do that. I mean like she steps in when she has too and when something getting out of control I see more like just another student.

Student 10 expressed:

Like last night my roommate was getting annoyed because someone on the third floor was playing their music really loud. And so, we went to Catherine and asked her and she went up there and told them to turn it down. So it’s just someone that’s there for you.

Student 5 noted, “she’s really strict though.” Student 5 also noted, “I am not a big fan of Catherine. But um, she’s very strict for uh like on random things. And I, I honestly I haven’t said like more than two words for her, to her.” Student 1 in the first interview said:

She certainly has gotten the golfers in trouble numerous times because their uhhh loud and they don’t have like many early classes so their like bouncing golf balls off the floor and then like you know chillin’ out kinda like guys do.
Student 5 noted, “I been uh confronted about keeping arm’s distance which was the beginning of the year. But I mean like that’s all pretty much the experience I’ve had with her.” Even though student 5 was confronted student 5 also said, “I guess she she keeps everyone safer and what not. Uh, she communicates with other people um, on the hall. And tells them you know how to what to do and how to be safe.” Students understand that policy enforcement keeps people safe and the residents stated Catherine did enforce the rules.

**No Impact**

Some students felt like the RAs helped them more than the peer mentor. Others did not know who Catherine was when asked about the peer mentor. Student 11 stated, “I feel the RAs like hang out with you more. Like they always like go to um lunch and stuff and try to do stuff I feel like [Catherine] is just kinda there.” Student 1 in the first interview emphasized, “she doesn’t do everything.” Student 3 when asked about the purpose of the mentor asked, “Catherine, right?” to make sure she knew who was being referred to in the question. Student 1 in the first interview was confused about if the peer mentor was the same for the golfers. He stated, “The golfers kinda poke fun at [Catherine] they, do they have one? Uhh, peer mentor, the golfers or is it Catherine?” Student 5 stated, “I don’t even know what [Catherine] does. I, I don’t know where she fits in anywhere.” Student 4 in the first interview when asked about Catherine’s purpose asked, “Um, peer mentor? What exactly, what exactly does that mean?”

Students explained Catherine from the perception of what other people thought of her. Student 1 in the first interview explained, “my roommate uhhh doesn’t really
interact much with her.” Student 14 said, “You know they just that she’s quiet and they don’t really understand her they don’t know her that well.” Student 11 stated the residents thought of Catherine as “generally good.” She also went on to say, “well I know like some other people think she like they’ll say hi to her too and she’ll be not like she won’t say anything. But I don’t think she like means too. I don’t know.” Student 9 expressed:

Some people don’t like her….I guess some people like she’s sort of like know it all-ish or uppittee sort of. I can’t think of the right word for it. Sort of like better than you feeling. But I I don’t really think so too much.

Student 5 noted, “I think my roommate is ok with her. Um, yeah I think she’s ok with her. They, they like if she’s she’s goes and talks to them I’m like she doesn’t really look at me.”

Some students said they did not rely on Catherine at all but utilized themselves as a resource. Student 13 noted, “I kinda like stay to myself and just deal with my own troubles.” Student 6 stated, “regardless of any surroundings or people other people really don’t have influence on me on that. Um, on like education because I already know what to do.” Student 14 expressed:

I haven’t used her that much in my you know my time here but I will say that you know even just seeing her in passing it’s been a nice yeah. She’s just a pleasant face a nice person to have. She’s encouraging um but I’ve never had to use her services for anything.

Several students said they were not close to Catherine. Student 11 stated, “we don’t have that close of a relationship. We just kinda say hi sometimes.” Student 11 continued by saying, “she works sometimes after me at the HEHD office, so we talk before. Student 8 expressed, “I don’t talk to [Catherine] as much as some of the other my
other buddies on my hall do. I don’t know why. I just never really have the time to walk around or sit down with her.” Student 14 said, “honestly, I haven’t used her that much in my you know my time here.” Student 12 noted, “I don’t really know her to well but a little bit I know her.” Student 2 expressed, “we have a pretty good relationship, we are not very close at all.” Student 5 explained, “I am not a big fan of [Catherine]. But um, she’s very strict for uh like on random things. And I, I honestly I haven’t said like more than two words for her, to her.” Student 5 also stated:

I do like the way um like the RAs the the RAs are really friendly. And like I know like my RA really good friends with a bunch of people on our hall. Like she, she seems like she’s really friendly with like everyone. And then like um the other RA I talked to her and Laverne seems the same way. I’m not on her side but she seems like she’s the same way. Like even like the guy RAs are pretty like the their like relaxed and they’ll discuss things with you and things like that. So it’s easy If I were to have a problem it seems like it would be easy to like talk to them.

Some students when asked about negative interactions with Catherine, some could not describe anything they had or seen other people have with her. Student explained, “I wouldn’t say I really had any negative interactions with Catherine.” Student 6 stated, “I haven’t had any negative [interaction with Catherine].” Student 8 when asked about if he had a negative interaction with Catherine expressed, “I really can’t, I really can’t. I haven’t had any bad experiences with HEHD.” This interaction shows that sometimes the students equate Catherine with the college itself. Student 4 in the first interview when asked about negative interactions with Catherine stated, “Not off the top of my head. Um, never had any arguments.” Also student 1 in the first interview said, “Negative. Not really no.” Student 9 when asked about negative interactions with Catherine said, “Um, not really. I mean there nothing really bad.” Student 12 when
asked about negative interactions with Catherine said, “there haven’t been any.” Student 14 stated, “I guess if I used her more maybe but you know just seeing her around she’s there is not much negative about her.” Several students described negative interactions they had with Catherine. Student 7 in the first interview said:

There was one time when I was going to rush for a sorority and she uh we were in the same setting or something and someone mentioned sorority or something like that. And I saw a negative look on her face but she’s never besides just that one look never anything. So, yeah. I just got a weird feeling but that’s it.

Student 11 expressed, “I’ve like in the beginning I’ve said hi to her and she just kinda looked at me.” Student 11 also stated Catherine is “hard to approach” because of her not being willing to say hi. Student 11 did continued and stated, “but she’s like a nice person.” Student 2 stated, “I think um, my RA had much more of an effect on like getting us all together to hangout and that kind of thing.” The residents expressed how other faculty, staff, and peers interacted and built relationships. All the interactions did not just come from Catherine.

**Peers**

Students noted their peers were an important connection for them. Student 11 stated, “the most significant was meeting my friends down the hall.” Student 4 in the second interview noted:

Where I fit among my peers and friends. Uh, you know I think to a certain extent a lot of that is going to happen naturally but someone like Catherine is kinda there to kinda help you know to help everyone kinda find a nice place to be I guess. I mean I mean I guess theres so assistance there. The main thing is people are going to find their niche and whole on their own.
Student 5 commented on her most significant experience as:

All the people. They you see them every day. So, and I really like living oh, my halls kinda I guess unique cause like in the beginning they were all everyone was friends on my hall. Like not, not at first but like they became friends every single person.

Student 12 also commented on her most significant experience as:

I would definitely say getting to know the other people in the community as well. Especially since we all live in the same dorm, definitely nice. To be close by to each other.

Student 8 stated:

I’d say the core concepts are um your building somewhat of a your building friendships among people you meet in here and your all doing your doing it with a health, health related like, you, you clean out your conscious.

Catherine was a peer of the students. Student 1 in the first interview noted Catherine is “someone our age that has been through what we have been through.”

Student 14 provided, “just seeing around you know, smiling faces, [Catherine] sitting at the desk. You know the one that um our RAs are real good about making sure we get to know each other stuff like that.” Student 8 stated:

One room up on the third floor that we kinda call the man cave because it has the two lazy boys in it. Whenever you get the chance to relax you can go in there and sit down and play xbox or just hang out with friends for a little bit. And she comes in often and then she’ll just sit and talk with us when there’s like five or six of us in there. And it’s nice to get that interaction again like I said before was just nice like getting to know people like that in the building.

Student 3 said:

She was really helpful in like the first few weeks. Because I mean you like got to know the girls on your hallway but she was like alright, you need to come out of your room now, let’s go meet people like she would like take people out of their rooms and be like and on like move in day she was like introducing people, and she brought like professors in to help move. She was walking around with a bunch of professors and the dean. And that was like, so you got to know her face
and then from there, she was like picking out students from random rooms and being like you know have you to met [laugh]. Like, so like, she kind of allowed us to like she forced us to bridge over into like the different hallways and met people.

Student 8 stated:

She does a good job of introducing you to people if you, if you go talk to her and someone comes up. She’ll go hey this is so and so and then you’re just networking like that. She helps with that too for kids because I’m from out of state. I’m from Virginia. So, I don’t, I don’t know I didn’t know anyone actually when I came down to Clemson and [Catherine] was one of the first people I met and then I met probably 5 or 6 people just in the dorm and maybe around the building too through Catherine just having conversations with her and meeting people.

Student 3 explained:

I think like it’s not like a big event but like at the end of the first semester I liked classes like all of them were like you need to have like everything due like this week. It was like that rush week and you just like I was just on the verge of breaking down. And I was like I can’t handle this like this is so much as a freshman. And like having some people like in my classes and like that lived on my hall and liked they noticed I was like not doing well and I was like not sleeping. And The fact that they all were like there to step up and support me like it was just so nice having somebody who I could be like you know that were in all of my classes and like understood. You know like to here let me help you with this. This is what like sleep in don’t go to class I will take your notes. This kinda thing. It was that was just. Then I realized I was really glad that I picked the community.

Sometimes there were issues with peers. The students felt comfortable asking Catherine for help in working out solutions with their peers. Student 9 stated, “I guess if you’re having a problem with another person like she can help you work it out.” Student 14 described peer interactions were important for classroom connections as:

I also think that I’ve come to you know study group and now I’m meeting people with similar interest as me to that I have and we can you know do do similar things like um right now we’re in a creative inquiry group that started out as um a class that everyone in HEHD started in but now it’s just you know the creative
inquiry it’s it’s down to like nine people in the class. But you know just being in HEHD we’re able to do stuff like that.

Students also commented on the connection they had with their roommate and the benefits from making this connection. Student 6 stated:

My roommate is a nursing major too. So, I mean we a few times we asked each other questions. Um, last semester we both had chemistry. We studied together for that. Um, we both had human communications, and we had to do um we had to practice speeches. We had to you know recite speeches in our class, so a few times I um that we practiced our speeches on each other.

Student 10 explained:

I thought it would be cool to be in here with people that have my majors. Well like my roommate has my same major which is really helpful. We share books and we help each other with assignments and do assignments together so that’s definitely helpful.

Student 5 noted:

I don’t like spending a lot of time in my room because I get I feel cramped and I mostly sleep in there. I sleep and study, if that. Um, and so like most of the time like at night we would not like bond during the day or anything and so it kinda so it was not awkward or anything but it’s like that slightly you know new person feeling in the beginning but then like at night like before you go to sleep you just like talk. So we got to know each other and it’s all good.

Student 5 also noted:

My roommate is amazing at giving advice. So I mean I, I talk to her about everything. I know that the um, like theirs a few people on our hall that does the same thing. So if anybody I’d figure her.

Student 5 finally stated she would return to the community because:

Well I get along really well with my roommate. And like in the in the beginning it was really awkward cause you wouldn’t think we would get along, alon, along at all cause we’re completely different. And um, but it actually ended up working out really well.
The Professional Golf Management men had a special connection with one another. This was noted from both students in that major as well as other majors.

Student 4 in the first interview noted:

I would definitely say so, um, you could say on weekends you know they all like hey we’re going to go hang out or we’re all going golfing. Um, I mean there’s kinda like little clicks inside the golf management but that’s expected cause we come from various parts of the United States. Um, you know one guy down the hall way is literally like two blocks away. And me and a couple of other guys are a couple of thousand miles away. Um, But I feel like it’s really helped bring us together, um, probably helped us bring the golf management guys together a lot faster than we would’ve without it. Um, we would’ve, we would’ve gotten to know each other but it would’ve taken a year or two from where we are now

Student 4 in the first interview also noted:

I would say it is pretty nice that uh, with the golf management guys all together. Um, whenever we need to go golfing or uh if we just want to hang out. You know kinda offers that opportunity for us to kinda get together and it kinda feels like what brings our program closer together. Um, I know other schools that have a similar program don’t have this in it. That is kinda why I shayed away from there cause you know they’re spread out across campus and you don’t really get to know all the golfers. Um, that’s kinda been one of the big things for me. Um, and it is nice getting to know all the people in the college. But I feel like having all the golf manager guys together is what really set this aside for me.

Student 4 in the first interview continued:

Well I mean I haven’t had very many classes outside of the golf management classes with guys in golf management. I don’t know how that worked out um, we are all suppose to take very similar courses. Um, But outside of a couple of lecture halls and the actual PRTM courses uh, so I can’t really attribute it to the classes, um, I would say just day in and day out you wake up in the morning and so and so has an eight o’clock class too and both just stumble around the building. Um you kinda get to know each other or feel like hey I got a movie invite a couple of guys across the hall. Um, so I feel like the learning community is what helped bring us together and of course you know we had a PGA meetings, um, which are only maybe once every two to three weeks which also help bring us together. But, um, I would say living-learning helped quite a bit.
The professional golf management major guys do not have the best reputation but it is still noted of the bond they have created between one another. Student 13 stated:

The one thing that probably needs to be changed is the deal with the golfers because the golfers are required to do this is what I have heard. So they have no like I don’t know how to say this. Um, they have no like commitment into so they don’t really like care about it and it sort of I sort of like got the short end of the stick a little bit because I am on a hall of like all golfers, so their not like as focused on like academic and like all the stuff like I am. But so it’s sort of like I feel like they shouldn’t be required to because that that makes them not want to do it that much more. And it makes the people who are put in their with them like sort of inconvenienced to an extent because they have to deal with people who aren’t happy with where they are and their like it’s just it’s just a weird deal. I mean it’s not horrible but I definitely think that like like a person like me like I don’t I don’t drink or anything so I don’t I don’t people coming back like drunk in like the morning is like I don’t want to deal with that and I mean it’s not like their bad people like their nice and stuff but it’s just it’s just kinda their their not in the right environment for them because they there’s really not a single one of them who is still in the living-learning community um class now. Because they didn’t want to do it. So it’s just kinda like a weird deal and I don’t know.

Student 1 in the first interview said:

They all kinda ehhh they like her they don’t dislike her ummm they kind of treat her like a big sister really and she ummm treats them like little brothers and like that uhhh as far as the golfers go.

Student 1 in the first interview continued:

Just kind of like a big sister to them a little bit of a watch dog at times uhh she certainly has gotten the golfers in trouble numerous times because their uhhh loud and they don’t have like many early classes so their like bouncing golf balls off the floor and then like you know chillin’ out kinda like guys do. And ummm she lives right below them and she has all these early morning clinical so she’s uhh has said some things about that but that nothing more than keeping normal freshmen in line.

Some students noted they did not know about peer interactions that happened on the hall. Student 6 when asked if peer interactions happen in the LLC she stated, “I don’t know.” Student 14 when asked about peer interaction within the LLC she stated, “I
haven’t really seen that much of that.” Student 14 went on to say that she would not make the same decision to live in the HEHD community because:

I don’t I don’t think so. I I like the idea of but with my personality I need the let’s see how I can word this the social the social life on the in the dorm is not very out going and I need and I’m not very outgoing either and I need other people. I mean it’s not there’s nothing wrong with the HEHD program. It’s just I think my experience this year with some of the with some of maybe it’s just the part of the hall I’m living in. I don’t know but um I just need more social an I need a more social environment for me to be comfortable I guess.

The connection with Catherine as a peer was hard for those who came from a different background than her. Student 7 stated:

Coming I’m from New York and I think my background is a lot different just religiously and economically and being northern. It’s very different than a lot of people here and I think she grew up um, well she’s very religious and I’m not saying anything against that. That’s great but it’s just at times I feel like that difference um is kind of apparent. I could feel it. And I felt like my background was so different than her background that it was a little bit harder to connect with her.

Student 8 felt more comfortable because the location and people are friendly to him. The larger community not just the peer mentor had an impact on connections made. Student 8 stated:

I’m just glad that I got coming from out of state and not knowing anyone it was a relief for me not to be in one of the big high rises or in the shoeboxes because I came well my high school was really big so I got I already know what it’s like to be around a whole lot, like a whole lot of people and I’m from northern Virginia and it real it’s real populated and um I came to Clemson because my parents my parents went to Clemson and it’s just been in the family. South Carolina is where everyone is from. And coming to a um this dorm specifically and the college how it’s all it’s a lot more face to face. There aren’t a whole lot of emails you have to send out because people are always around the building you can just see someone and say hey I was going to shoot you an email but now I don’t have to cause we’re all in everyone’s in nice nice quarters. Like some people might think it’s tight quarters but it’s a small amount of people. So it’s good to like have a better personal relationship with kids going through the same thing you’re going through freshman year.
Student 8 said:

it was just kind of the phase from going into high school into college it was that I really can’t think of a better program than coming through HEHD because everyone’s so friendly. I mean I’m in Clemson we’re your in South Carolina so everyone’s going to be real friendly. But, but having the people that work here their all very understanding if you have like a class conflict and stuff like that for meetings and stuff.

Student 3 noted what she had learned through peer interactions was to now give back to the community:

I mean in a way like the other girls on my hallway have become mentors. Because we all have our moments where we like hit rock bottom and there and then like they step in and kinda act like little Catherine’s. like I don’t know like they there like they know what to say because she has helped them. And they are like lets talk about this. So like I think in a way like we have all had a point where we have had to be like ok let’s channel our inner Catherine. Let’s see what’s wrong. And like that you know is cause she’s helped us and it is our turn to help somebody else.

**Involvement**

Connections also happened through involvement in the community networking and planned activities for the community. Student 7 in the second interview stated, “I have interacted with her a lot when she comes around to the different doors, or if we do programs and stuff.” Student 12 when commenting on how peer interactions happen stated, “through the events is how.” Student 13 explained:

One of the things that kinda helped me was um one time I she just like kinda asked me to do things to like get involved and that kinda like help me out to get to meet people in the um the living-learning community. And like usually like I don’t know I’ve kinda like hung with like my high school friends and I’ve kinda gotten to know like them better, so outside people more as she like asks me to do stuff and things like that.
Student 13 also explained:

I think she’s just like with all the things that she does just like running all the um I don’t what you call them activities and things that we have like in the hall. She just brings everybody together like I said earlier just like brings everybody together and lets them puts them like in a comfortable environment so where they can like their they can branch out and like meet other people that are instead of like being fort of like nervous and its an easier transition when you’re comfortable with talking to people and she kinda makes that easier.

Student 8 expressed:

She does a nice job of coming by when we’re in groups. She She’ll come by when your alone and say like how’s it going, there’s pizza down stairs, or remember there’s an event coming up if you guys want to.

Student 10 noted:

Well there’s different social events every month. I know that RAs kinda headem’ up but Catherine helps with that like um, she helps plan them. And she’s always there at the events, that um try and get people to come together like down in the lobby or like different games and stuff.

Planned activities from Catherine and the RAs helped the students make connections. Student 12 stated, “Well she is very into the different events that we have here. She tries to bring all of us together. Every once in a while in the dorms especially.”

Student 7 in the first interview explained, “She’s um helped to organize a lot between the RAs and the students and always tries to help out if anyone wants to do anything involved in that. She knows what’s going on in the building.” Student 13 noted:

The biggest thing I mean she basically like runs everything in here. And so it just helps she gets everybody together, gets everybody talking and stuff and obviously like there are some people who don’t like get into it as much as other people but it just helps to have her to bring everybody together cause it’s hard like cause there’s a lot of people who have like a comfort zone with their friends that they already have so, it’s so she kinda brings them together and helps that a little bit.
Student 8 explained:

Well they always have different organizations or different events kind of in the common room. Like we had a FIFA tournament and she had I’m pretty sure she helped out with that. And then we have different meetings where someone maybe in your position that’s coming to do a study. We’ll have a meeting in there and then we will all meet downstairs. And they’ll give their speech about whatever their study is. And then Catherine, I know Catherine helps in the organization. The fact that she’s always there helping that out.

Student 11 stated, “They do programs like last night they did the alcohol program.”

Student 11 explained the alcohol program as:

We played water pong rather than beer pong. And then the police came and talked to us about it. And kinda like told us like real life examples of them like having to like tell the parents that their kid died because they were drinking and driving and stuff. And they gave out like information about like blood alcohol content. And stuff and it made you think. It was a good program.

Student 11 also noted, “well she helps do do some of the programs. And like she helped with we did a pumpkin carving and she was there.” Student 6 said:

I know like some other things they had um like the first couple of weeks um my RA, she um, like organized a little game but that week I went home. So I couldn’t go. I know we also have, I go home a lot so. I know we had a um like a Halloween party. And we also had something else, but those are the things I remember.

There was a sense of enjoyment at the events where connections were happening.

Student 11 noted, “Most fun, um, maybe the game of life that my RA did. That was fun.”

Student 12 stated:

Well at the beginning of the year there were a ton. Different meetings too she would always try to get us. We had a holiday party and the recent the game of life thing. We try to do stuff in here every now and then which is really fun I like it.
Student 6 expressed:

Well I would say um just all of the activities that they have planned. Um, Their well my, well my peer mentor and the RA, they always have you know do the things that we could go to such as the game of life that I signed up to do this interview with. At and um, it’s just like you know if your bored you a day that they have something you can just go. So I think that’s what I would say is my most significant experience here.

Student 6 also expressed, “the most recent one was the game of life that was real fun.

Um, I know I think one time we just had like a little get together in the commons room.”

Student 6 also followed up and stated, “she well well she makes a positive impact when she um participates in the in the get togethers that we have. Um, she was stationed at the game of life, so that’s a positive impact.”

Student 9 noted:

Um, I really liked the game of life that they put on. That was a lot of fun. And I think that was like one of the most fun events that they’ve done this year. And I feel like the most people participated in it. So I liked one. Um, well everyone was there and like just having a good time and like actually like talking to each other and I guess it was like very involved. Like you actually had to do something. And it was fun. It was a game.

Student 11 explained:

It’s a treasure hunt kinda like based on um, Saint Patrick’s Day. I made the clues. It’s like like one of the clues is like um the original color of Saint Patrick’s Day was blue. But it got switched to green but I forget how so go and find blue’s room which is one of the residents. So you go to his room get a clue go to the next one. And the winner gets a spill the beans gift certificate

Student 14 explained, “well you know we have the programs and stuff in the common room and um they have speakers and stuff come and talk to us about I don’t know I I don’t really go to a lot of them.” Student 14 continued by stating she did not think the activities were planned well:
It’s and I’m not wanting to bash anybody and I don’t think I think that Catherine and our RAs do a great job of you know lining up events for us to do. I just think that some of the you know and I’m including myself in this. We’re just the people on our hall are just very not outgoing and not willing to do some of the stuff they put out there for us.

There were also lunch meetings where the academic advisors came in to meet with students in a large group and answer questions. Student 6 said, “this first semester we had a like little luncheon thing.” Student 7 in the first interview stated:

I would say just today had a lunch meeting with our advisors and um just in the lounge here. They had pizza and everything. She was there and we were all just hanging out talking, eating. And she’s definitely someone that makes you feel more comfortable in settings with um college meetings and stuff like that. She’s there I feel like to ease the transition a lot. So that would be one example of where she like brought down the um I don’t know like the official feeling of the meeting. She made it more comfortable.

Student 8 noted:

We frequently like have little pizza parties here and that’s kinda good because we’re all so busy during the day going in and out of the building that when you get something I mean the pizza’s great but also your getting time to meet with new people. Meeting with people that work in the HEHD college that are there helping out. People that you doing that HEHD 199 class that I did my first semester back in the fall with. So, real helpful to get to know them a little better.

The students were encouraged through activities to interact with their peers which supported community involvement and friendships. Student 7 in the first interview noted:

It’s more of like an underlying thing I think. By providing um activities or information about that or supporting the community as a whole kind of encourages peers to interact um, I wouldn’t say specifically, she doesn’t go around and say ol’ you should hang out with her blab, blab, blah but I think she definitely supports the community and friendships that way.
Catherine encouraged the residents to get involved through the activities and then helped the residents connect with one another through the different involvement options with the living-learning community.

**Individual**

Several students said they did not rely on connections with other people but were individualistic people. Student 13 stated, “I kinda like stay to myself and just deal with my own troubles.” Student 4 in the second interview stated, “I’m a very individualistic person so I wouldn’t say that she defined my role in society.” Student 14 said:

> It’s and I’m not wanting to bash anybody and I don’t think I think that Catherine and our RAs do a great job of you know lining up events for us to do. I just think that some of the you know and I I’m including myself in this. We’re just the people on our hall are just very not outgoing and not willing to do some of the stuff they put out there for us.

Student 9 expressed a moment when she just wanted to have an individual conversation:

> well um there’s this girl in nursing [removed name] not [removed name], sorry [removed name]. No [removed name]. [removed name] is her middle name. Who uh she um she wanted to drop out so she was like talking to me about it. And I like accidentally said something to her I didn’t want too. And I wanted to go apologize to her but this girl was in a lot of you know like a distraught emotional state. So Catherine was like trying to help her and she did help her. But and then like um I wanted to go apologize to her because I accidentally called her crazy. So, um then Catherine was like no you shouldn’t do that. I was like Catherine this does have anything to do with you.

Student 2 explained:

> I am really involved in Reformed University Fellowship it’s a lot like campus crusade for Christ or FCA and um, I do a lot with that. And um, Swing dancing, I go to the club on Wednesday nights and on Monday nights they have this thing at 356 and umm, a lot of involved in Student Nurses Association, so we do a lot of volunteer work and um, help out with that.
Student 2 went on to explain:

We have a pretty good relationship, we are not very close at all because it was um, she just helped me with academics stuff and I actually am not in the dorm a lot of the time because I am involved with a lot other extracurriculars and that kinda thing. But um, she is really nice and so you know were chill.

Student 13 summarized the need some students shared to not utilize Catherine but to stick to the plan they came into school with:

Um, in the living-learning community, um, probably, I don’t know. I I usually just study a lot so I mean it’s just good to be like in here and just like not like have that craziness that probably goes on in like other dorms you know. I mean I don’t I haven’t really gone to many of the um functions or whatever because of lacrosse. Because I do that basically every night so I’m doing that like every day of the week. So I don’t really have the opportunity to go to them but I but I mean I’ve heard they’re really good and stuff. So I mean if I had the opportunity I would probably go to them but I just don’t have the chance cause of lacrosse. That’s my first focus besides school.

Academics

Students spoke about their academic connections. These connections included working with students of the same major, Catherine bringing faculty to the residence hall, or individual students connecting to their individual peers for help. Student 9 stated the core concepts of the LLC were to, “like promote the idea of the community within like all the different majors and like having people like help each other. And so you can do better like academically.” Student 12 stated she would not have known about the HEHD 199 class in the second semester had she not been in the LLC and therefore would not have connected with her peers on health promotion issues. She stated, “I don’t think so no, not at all.” Student 13 stated:

She’s helped out a lot. Like She she brought in she brings in like a lot of time like our advisors and stuff. They have like things in they come to Mauldin and help out. And that’s like a big help sometime cause I I mean I personally I haven’t
used it but I know that like if I ever had anything that was worrying about like academically and I needed to talk to somebody that that I could ask her where to find her them or what what I need to do to get in contact with them. So that’s just a good like comfort thing that you can fall on if you need something.

Student 10 noted:

So, she has a direct link with Kristin and she’s been working with her for 4 years now. So she kinda knows how things work and if if we have a meeting with Kristin and then we’re kinda confused about it then we can ask Catherine and she will probably know.

Student 1 in the first interview noticed the relationship between Catherine and Ms. Goodenow and described it as:

She has a good relationship with my ummm counselor Kristin uhh she talks to her a lot but umm, my relationship with Kristin is just directly with Kristin, Ms. Goodenow, ummm so she doesn’t really facilitate my relationship with Kristin but she knows her very well and I can talk to her about Kristin if I have any questions. But umm, my relationship is just strictly with Kristin.

Student 1 in the second interview explained:

Last semester we had that whole like one credit hour course and then this semester we don’t really have anything. Um its they just kinda introduced us to the college and like all the other different stuff and kinda let us go.

Students would get together to discuss school work. Student 14 described her most significant experience in the LLC as “getting to know the people I am living with and being able to yeah discuss you know school work stuff like that. Student 4 in the first interview explained:

I’ve gotten to know a couple of nursing majors, um, I feel, I feel like you know from now on for the next four years I’ll be walking around campus and be like hey I know him. He’s in my college. Um, it kinda builds fellowship in the college. Um, you know it creates I guess like they say an academic environment um, kinda suited towards our uh, our studies. Uh, especially in the golf management. Uh, I keep reiterating that but uh, I feel like you know whenever we have something big we’ll have a PGA test once a semester and uh, you know you just walk down the hall and everyone is studying. And like in one room or
another room or we’re all going to the library. It’s pretty nice. Um, so I feel like it has kinda helped bring especially for the golf management guys we have a very similar curriculum. It’s helped us prepare for test and study for stuff like that.

Catherine helped students with faculty connections. When asked about the purpose of the peer mentor, student 3 stated “dean like you know get to know him.” Student 3 saw the purpose of the peer mentor as a person to connect her to different faculty in HEHD. Student 3 stated:

She was really helpful in like the first few weeks. Because I mean you like got to know the girls on your hallway but she was like alright, you need to come out of your room now, let’s go meet people like she would like take people out of their rooms and be like and on like move in day she was like introducing people, and she brought like professors in to help move. She was walking around with a bunch of professors and the dean. And that was like, so you got to know her face and then from there, she was like picking out students from random rooms and being like you know have you to met [laugh]. Like, so like, she kind of allowed us to like she forced us to bridge over into like the different hallways and met people.

Student 2 stated:

A lot of times I know Um, Kristin my advisor for the nursing community will come and um, they will open up the common room down there so that like all the people in the living-learning community can come visit her and um maybe flesh out some issues that you know we’ve had academically. So she facilitates that.

Student 10 explained, “actually Kristin[academic advisor] um, comes to Mauldin and I think like once a month and like just sits in the lobby and we can meet with her and ask her different questions.” Student 6 said, “this first semester we had a like little luncheon thing.” Student 8 stated:

We frequently like have little pizza parties here and that’s kinda good because we’re all so busy during the day going in and out of the building that when you get something I mean the pizza’s great but also your getting time to meet with new people. Meeting with people that work in the HEHD college that are there helping out. People that you doing that HEHD 199 class that I did my first semester back in the fall with. So, real helpful to get to know them a little better.
Student 7 in the first interview expressed:

Well I would say just today had a lunch meeting with our advisors and um just in the lounge here. They had pizza and everything. She was there and we were all just hanging out talking, eating. And she’s definitely someone that makes you feel more comfortable in settings with um college meetings and stuff like that. She’s there I feel like to ease the transition a lot. So that would be one example of where she like brought down the um I don’t know like the official feeling of the meeting. She made it more comfortable.

Student 14 explained:

She we had like lunches with our advisors and she will start a conversation with you and the advisor at the same time just to get you know you to communicate with your advisor something that you might not do on your own. The conversation you might not start on your own. But she you know facilitates the I mean I guess she starts the conversation. One that you wouldn’t usually start on your own.

Student 12 did note there was little faculty interaction by stating, “the only faculty we worked with were the people who led it the HEHD CI. So that’s our only faculty connection we had.”

Students shared they made connections with students of similar or same major.

Student 12 understood the core concepts “to bring us together because we have similar interest similar majors.” Student 1 in the first interview stated:

Rooming with a lot of people with the same major. Ummm, I was Ummm, were able to talk about a lot of the same classes we have because all of the nurses have the same set schedule. So we are able to connect more with that and kinda see how each other stand in the classes uhhh, so that does help rooming with the same people in the same major.

Student 9 expressed:

I thought it’d be cool like to live with people who were like in my major in nursing. And I guess I mean if people were in the same like area of major’s that I was in then we would have like stuff common which would make it easy to make friends.
Student 6 said:

Well I think ok um just you know being surround with people of your major and of related majors um if we had any questions we could ask them like I did about my um what classes I should take for like the upper nurs like um what I ask of Adri well my peer mentor and my RA. And um, my my roommate is a nursing major too. So, I mean we a few times we asked each other questions. Um, last semester we both had chemistry. We studied together for that. Um, we both had human communications, and we had to do um we had to practice speeches. We had to you know recite speeches in our class. So a few times I um that we practiced our speeches on each other. Just um being that um your with people of your major or related to your major like yall taking the same classes so yall can study together and help each other. So I think that’s good.

Student 4 in the first interview explained:

I’ve gotten to know a couple of nursing majors, um, I feel, I feel like you know from now on for the next four years I’ll be walking around campus and be like hey I know him. He’s in my college. Um, it kinda builds fellowship in the college. Um, you know it creates I guess like they say an academic environment um, kinda suited towards our uh, our studies. Uh, especially in the golf management. Uh, I keep reiterating that but uh, I feel like you know whenever we have something big we’ll have a PGA test once a semester and uh, you know you just walk down the hall and everyone is studying. And like in one room or another room or we’re all going to the library. It’s pretty nice. Um, so I feel like it has kinda helped bring especially for the golf management guys we have a very similar curriculum. It’s helped us prepare for test and study for stuff like that.

It was noted by several participants that Catherine really only helped the nursing majors academically. Student 10 stated Catherine “is in my same major.” Student 12 (non-nursing) expressed:

Definitely for nursing majors, you know since she is in it as well. It is definitely very helpful for them because they have exactly the same. And especially since she’s a senior you know she has been through the program so knows what you know what they all have been asking her about what to expect in the future.

Student 6 (nursing) stated:

I thought it would be good to be around people of my major. Um, like I said um being I have a nursing roommate like you study together first semester and like
right now we have the same um statistics class. And like if I missed a classes or whatever she um like she could like tell me what I missed or things like that. So I think that’s good. And um, yeah that’s why I chose to live in HEHD.

Student 10 (non-nursing) stated:

Yeah I’m definitely glad I was put in it. I was kinda mad about it at first because I think we had to pay like 200 dollars extra or something like that. But um I’m definitely glad I was because I’ve met a lot of other nursing students and I’ve got to be under Catherine’s and Domonique’s like advising and like if I ever had any issues or questions you know I could go to them and they would really understand what I was talking about. Because their both nursing majors and they’ve been through what I’ve been through.

Student 10 also stated:

I thought it would be cool to be in here with people that have my majors. Well like my roommate has my same major which is really helpful. We share books and we help each other with assignments and do assignments together so that’s definitely helpful.

Overall, the connections made between peers and Catherine lead to understanding how the academic performance of the community members was affected. The students having peers to be involved with and interact with provided an avenue for the connections to happen from academics. The academic environment that was created is described below.

**Academic Milieu**

Catherine had several interactions with the students. The environment created was one that supported a high level of academic performance. Students understanding of the core concepts of six dispositions of the college provided students an environment to support academic performance in a community. Student 4 in the first interview stated, “the core concepts, Uh I feel like it’s kinda, it kinda brings our college together a little more.” Student 9 when asked about the core concepts of the HEHD college stated, “Uh,
ok. Um, is it really bad that I can’t.” Student 9 continued by stating, “I guess just helping I guess sort of like promote the idea of the community within like all the different majors and like having people like help each other. And so you can do better like academically.”

Academic environment was affected by both the characteristics of the peer mentor and the environment created within the LLC. Some of the categories under academic milieu that were prevalent through Catherine were as an encourager, resource, role model, or having no impact. Lastly, students talked about the common class they had to take during the fall semester.

**Encourager**

Students described Catherine as an encourager during academic stressful times. Student 7 in the second interview noted, “within the college community because um I think a lot of what she is about is classes and not just classes but just um like for college and how you can best succeed I think.” Student 8 expressed how Catherine supports the students during final exams:

I really love about [Catherine] is she always comes around your room when it’s like mid terms or finals or something. And she puts a little sticky note like on your door. That says like good luck on finals then she’ll sign it like herself. I’ve seen her walk around doing them individually like by herself. It’s nice to get that little, instead of having to print out a copy. She goes by and does like hand hand written so it feels like it means something.

Student 14 explained:

She you know we she made sure that we you know did everything we were suppose to. She you know reminded us when class was meeting because we only met a couple of times a semester. She reminds us when we went she would you know get us together before we were getting ready to go um she sent out emails
reminding us of you know our assignments and stuff that were due. She was um very on top of things in making sure that we were on top of things too.

Student 8 also expressed:

She does a nice job of coming by when we’re in groups. She’ll come by when your alone and say like how’s it going, there’s pizza down stairs, or remember there’s an event coming up if you guys want to

Student 3 stated:

She’s really supportive. Like when we join like different activities on campus or like we like did well on a class project she like you know oh my gosh I heard about your project. And I heard about you joining this what’s it like your like doing really well. So like just like those characteristics make her amazing.

Catherine was someone who encouraged the students academically. She posted signs on doors to encourage them through finals and she also would stop by to see how they were doing with school work. The encouragement in academics was part of the environment created in the LLC.

**Resource**

Students also described Catherine as an academic resource helping with scheduling classes and helping with homework. Student 6 said, “I would define peer mentor as was someone who you could come to when you like need help with something like any subject being that we are HEHD.” Student 9 stated, “I’ve really had anything I needed to talk to her about other than scheduling last semester. She was helpful.” Student 2 stated, “she gave me a lot of advice about just different classes we were going to take and um especially different professors that I should choose because she has gone through everything that I am going through right now.” Student 3 explained:

I she like positively affects it because she done this already. Like this is all I mean like she has those tips. And I think like you can go to her and like I mean she has
taken a lot of our classes like our gen eds so we can be like I don’t understand this and she like pulls out her old notes and like she really like wants to make sure that you are doing the best you can in your classes.

Student 6 said:

I asked her about taking classes um, ok I came in with AP credits so I had a lot. I have a lot of room in my schedule. And I was asking her um like what should I do with that room. Um, she, but she told me I could take up a minor and um I also asked her about the teachers that she had like I have. I am taking psychology right now. And I ask her who she took and who was probably the best teacher that I should take. And you know whether she liked her teacher. So, and the conversation went on for about I’ll say twenty minutes you know just her like telling me things that I should do. Or classes that I should take.

Student 12 noted:

I had a question about a class that I have to take. That was, she was the first person I ran into asking because she is someone who is close to my age so she can understand where I am coming from with that.

Student 10 noted:

I think the most helpful thing that’s like that I’ve gotten out of being a living-learning community is the fact that I have my RA and I have Catherine here that can like help me when I have questions about my schedule or about like different classes that I have have taken or am taking or will be taking.

Student 10 also noted, “Or even just concerns within our major or within the dorm or like if we have issues within the dorm.” Student 9 said

Last semester when I asked her like what classes would be good. Cause I needed other ones that I could take because I’d already filled up a lot of my credit hours, so that are necessary. So, I needed one that maybe I could move forward and she was like she told me like inside like things she would have done if she were me freshmen year.

Student 2 expressed that Catherine, “help[s] you out a lot with academic stuff especially that was the only specific thing she helped me on but I know she has helped um, a couple friends down the hall with other things.” Student 2 also expressed, “she just helped me
with academics stuff and I actually am not in the dorm a lot of the time because I am involved with a lot other extracurriculars and that kinda thing. But um, she is really nice and so you know were chill.” Student 2 also noted about her friends on the hall, “you know they really look to her when they need help academically.” Student 2 said:

She helped me a lot with um, scheduling especially. And I had planned on studying abroad when I talked with her last and she helped me in umm, just letting me know what I needed to do in order to make that happen. Cause for a nursing major especially um we have very specific requirements for courses that we have to fulfill and so like it is a very small window of opportunity that we have too do that. So she was helpful to help me figure that out.

Student 2 also said:

She helps us a lot with um you know like when we are looking at our schedules telling us you know you might not want to take that many hours or you might not want to take these two classes at once because it would be to much of a work load. That You would not be able to handle and so that really helpful in figuring out you know when we uh need to accomplish certain things.

Student 1 in the first interview stated:

As far as academic standing umm we’ve talked about classes before ummm she kind of helped me out in uhh nursing 140 it was where uhh you know where you first get into a class you don’t really know how the test are or what the teacher is like you can do as well as you can but if you don’t do what the teacher wants then you get a bad grade she’s kinda of helped us because she has been through the same classes that we have as far as what the teachers want what how we should gear our studying towards and more vocabulary, more concepts. So she certainly umm helped me out at nursing 140 which was a lot of jumping through the hoops.

Student 10 noted:

Well last semester I was kinda confused about how the whole registration for classes was and uh I um, didn’t know what some of the classes were like cause some of the classes you have an option. Or um like for example, I was trying to choose which um non-lit requirement class to take and I was asking her about the different options because it was kind of confusing in the undergraduate catalog thing. And I was asking her what the different options were and like what class she took and if she enjoyed it. Or if she had heard of anyone else that had taken a different class they liked better. Um, so I feel like that was really helpful because
I got to pick the class that I really enjoy now. Now I wasn’t stuck in a class that was not fun.

Student 13 explained:

I don’t know if it’s that much of a big deal with academics but I think it’s more of when as she like makes you feel more secure in like the environment like the college environment you if you feel better than you’ll perform better on like test and things and you can you your more comfortable like doing your work and it helps you like if your if your calm and accepting everything like in the community then you then you accept it and you can calm down and focus on stuff better. So it, so it helps in that way I guess but not like directly academically.

Student 1 in the second interview noted:

…whenever I um whenever I use to see her by the desk I use to like go and leave for my class a little bit early and um as I was going out the door if I had like a question about say SNA or any of the courses that I was going through like we had this one course called what was it um nursing infomatics….Nursing infomatics was uh not very good. It It was like a course where you just jump through the hoops. Like you all of our tasks were like open to the internet. And we didn’t really learn anything past like a byte a gigabyte what is the definition between data and knowledge and stuff like that and um it’s a required course for the nursing majors to take so we were all in there and just like listening to lectures that we already knew and that we could look up anyway. And um so, it was kind of a BS course and then like we had one project like through the whole year that was just like turn in this paper about one topic that interest us and we all turned in this paper and she graded it like really harshly on formatting errors and stuff. And didn’t really do much on the content. So that was it was overall a frustrating course. So I talked to Catherine and she kinda helped me understand the format of how to study for these test in order to make a good grade. How to exactly jump through the hoop. So whenever um that was one of the first conversations that I had with her was about the nursing 140 class and she went through the same thing and she was like yeah it wasn’t that fun.

Non-nursing majors realized Catherine was a resource for nursing majors. Student 12 (non-nursing) stated:

Well definitely for nursing majors, you know since she is in it as well. It is definitely very helpful for them because they have exactly the same. And especially since she’s a senior you know she has been through the program so knows what you know what they all have been asking her about what to expect in the future
Student 3 (non-nursing) explained that Catherine helped her even though she was not a nursing major:

I think like even she’s not necessarily like taking us to meet our like faculty or not like you know that kinda thing but I think she gives you like the tools to deal with the professor. Because like the professor is a lot different than like a high school teacher and that wasn’t easy at least for me to grasp coming in. So like I had this professor my first semester, and I was like I don’t understand how he teaches. This is ridiculous. There’s no rythmn or reason, He’s just talking. And she like sat down with me and she was like you know set up a meeting time with him and talk to him about this. And like if you put in the effort then he’s going to learn your name and because of her I set up that meeting and like I loved the professors class at the end. I just would never had had the initiative to be like shoot him an email and be like I don’t understand what you are doing.

But the participants that were non-nursing majors also noticed Catherine was able and did help nursing majors more. Student 5 said, “She’s in nursing. Maybe she helps the nursing majors.” Student 3 stated:

I have noticed she’s cause she’s a nursing major. That she tends to be pro nursing majors. So like, I mean I guess like she doesn’t mean to come off like that but sometimes it’s like nursing, nursing, nursing and your like well I’m a PRTM like what about me [laugh] kinda thing. You can definitely tell there are like certain girls on the hallway that she’s you know like making sure their ok because she knows freshman year like nursing it’s so that’s like the only thing that I thought man I kinda wish I was nursing.

Catherine was described as being an academic resource. She helped students with their class schedule. More specifically she was able to help the nursing majors in great detail because she was a nursing major as well.

**Role model**

Catherine was seen as an academic role model. Student 7 in the first interview said, “we did the class together and she was a good person there kind of a good role model I would say for that aspect.” Student 10 noted:
She does encourage us to do well in our classes but also like um just like not doing drugs and alcohol. Like we did that class the HEHD 199. We did that together and so in that whenever we were working in groups or whatever we were meeting for that class we would talk about you know being as healthy as possible because we are nursing majors and we need to live out what we you know do in our profession. Um, and I guess just along that basis like not drinking and not doing drugs and being healthy and exercising.

Student 7 in the first interview stated:

I think she’s definitely a good role model because I know that she is involved in a lot with the college. And she seems very hardworking with her nursing and very interested in it and you can tell that her knowledge in it is best and so I feel like she definitely tries to just like her being their alone kinda bumps everyone else up. Wants to do well, and yeah.

Student 7 also noted in the first interview noted:

She took the class with us. And so um she did everything we were doing. She had to do all the assignments everything like that. I would say she was a role model definitely for that class. And also she connected with the teacher communicated with the teacher, so if there were any if there was any confusion with the class or assignment she always found out and um since it was the first time the class was being held and it was first semester freshman year for a lot of us. I think that not everyone was comfortable communicating with the teachers like she was. And so she really stepped in to help people out and showed that they could do it too. So I think she was a really good role model in that area.

Student 7 also in the first interview noted:

wouldn’t say she it’s more of like an underlying thing I think. By providing um activities or information about that or supporting the community as a whole kind of encourages peers to interact um, I wouldn’t say specifically, she doesn’t go around and say ol’ you should hang out with her blab, blab, blah but I think she definitely supports the community. And friendships that way.

Student 13 explained:

She was she was more of like an organizer sort of person like um, I guess you could say like she kinda was like the round up of like getting people to go to it. And like making sure that like when we had our meeting she was the one who like made sure that everybody went and she um and she would document who couldn’t come for whatever reason and then and then I have like other meetings but I didn’t miss any meetings but I think they had other meetings for people who
missed. So, like she was like she was like reporting administration those. And then um she she was sort of like in it with us so she was doing the same sort of stuff. Like she was doing the same activities we were. Which sort of like helped us out a little bit because felt like we have somebody to go to if we had like questions or things like that. She help she would sort of like a mediate uh a communication resource between us and the faculty. Rather than us talking directly to the faculty, we could talk to her and she would relay like what what our concerns were with the faculty faculty that was running it. So it helped out to have have her to make that transition because sometimes it can be like sort of intimidating for like a student to especially a freshmen to like go to a professor and talk to them about something. So, its with her having her to like balance that and allow us to talk to them indirectly helped out that way. She she was just like like sort of like the backbone I guess of the whole thing really.

Student 11 stated, “she hasn’t really affected mine but I guess like since she works hard it kind makes you want to work hard. If anyone has questions they can go to her about academics.” Even some participants who Catherine has not had a lot of interaction said Catherine made them want to work hard because Catherine was a model for them.

**No Impact**

Some students said that Catherine did not have any impact on their academic performance. Student 9 when asked about how Catherine had affected the academic performance of members stated: “Uh, not very much I would say.” Student 11 noted, “I mean I feel like academically it hasn’t really done anything for me.” However the students knew even if they had not gone to Catherine for help could have gone to her if they wanted too. Student 14 provided:

I don’t I don’t know I mean I feel like if I ever needed help with anything and I went to her she would be willing to help me with school work. But I haven’t gone to her about it.

Student 6 said:

Like I said we have a question sheet we could ask her but it’s like she doesn’t I mean she does know that if there’s anything you know that we need her like we
need to ask her then we could. But I wouldn’t say like she really you know my personal um academic performance she hadn’t really impacted it other than you know advising me which classes to take.

Student 6 also said:

One of my big scholarships have um its like I have to maintain a 3.0 year wise, yearly not just semesterly. So, I mean that is my biggest motivation for me because I mean if I lose that scholarship then its like seven thousand dollars a year. So, [laugh] that’s um. And my parents you know being that they don’t want to have to pay that seven thousand dollars. Um, but that’s my biggest motivation and just um I just want to do good in school regardless. Even when I was in high school and elementary school. But my, my parents they put their foundation in me. So, like regardless of any surroundings or people other people really don’t have influence on me on that. Um, on like education because I already know what to do.

Student 14 stated, “I kinda like stay to myself and just deal with my own troubles.”

Student 4 expressed:

I mean she is always there to make sure we’re having a good day. I, I mean, let’s see academic performance. I mean I have never gone to her for any academic help or anything. I am always kinda a very independent person. Um, when it comes to my studies. Um, but I am sure if you needed anything she would probably be one of the first people to go to in this building.

Some students stated a peer mentor could not help or did not help with faculty interactions. Student 4 noted:

Well my HEHD professors, I only have two of them. I already knew them before I came here. So, um, they are both golf management instructors. So, I feel like, you know, a peer mentor really couldn’t help in that area because I already knew them well, um, and those are the only living-learning HEHD professors that I have this semester.

Student 6 explained, “Um, well I didn’t, I didn’t have any instances where she need to um like help me get in touch with anyone. So just from my personal experience um she didn’t really.” Even though some students stated Catherine did not help them the students still knew they could go to her if they had questions.
Students in the living-learning community had to take a required class in the fall. This class was designed to give the students several challenges around health related issues. Student 12 stated, “what it felt like was more like taking a health class instead of a community like I thought it would be…. We only met three times” Student 7 in the first interview stated, “Well we met, we only met three times about and it was really more outside [the classroom].” Student 2 explained how participating in the class which was a study was a big part of the living-learning community experience:

Participating in um the study where we had to run the mile and we had our health assessed and umm, that was definitely a big part of living here. That was a little bit of a surprise too because I hear they did not tell us until like the first day but It was pretty significant I would say.

Student 2 continued to explain:

It entailed um, we had to go through this kinda wholistic health assessment at the beginning of the semester. And um, we had to uh wear a pedometer for 3 weeks and record um, just like number of steps and then write about our experience with that. And then we had different health challenges we had to fulfill over like 3 week periods. And um, that was a lot of that. And then we had to do different like interviews with different um like people at Fike. Or help out with different things. And um write about that in order to like make a grade of an A.

Student 4 said:

I mean, I kinda took it seriously, I know some of the guys on my hall didn’t really take the pedometer thing seriously. But you know it’s, sometimes your busy and you just got to take the easy way out. Um, I felt like it was pretty nice. Um you know I got a pedometer out of it.

Student 10 stated:

Honestly I was kind of annoyed with it at first just because I was taking so 15 hours last semester and I had a lot of other stuff going on. But I think it was helpful in that we learned about different ways to promote healthiness and wellness in the community and there were like different outreaches that they did.
Um within the community as well that just you know promoted just education and even just like health and wellness in the community. And even like on the campus.

Student 1 in the first interview noted:

Well in the first semester we had to do this whole schpeel with HEHD. We were all signed up for like this required class and umm. It actually uses uhh experiment uhh like subjects for them to test. Uhmm. Let’s see they had a pedometer on us. For one experiment they had given us a nutrition challenge. So that was the most involved experience I had with HEHD.

Student 7 in the first interview stated:

And um, it took us through like health really, so I had to do a physical um, exam kind of about where I was. And also we did a um survey kind of and that was that general health for um I guess it was more mental emotional and eating nutrition stuff like that. And uh then we did some I would say experiments kind of like we had pedometers for a month everyday. And we did it numbered each day our goal was to get 10,000 steps. And then another month our project was to um see how many servings of vegetables we eat each day. And that was like a team thing. So at the end everyone got a certain number of points and the winning team got I think it was um gift certificates to go out to eat.

Student 2 said, “we were required too, none of us knew about it until like our first week at Clemson.”

The class was required and the students did not find out about it until they arrived at Clemson. Some students stated they did not like the class. Student 7 in the first interview noted, “guess the class first semester was I mean it’s not a decent memory from it.” Student 9 expressed, “that was kind of a pointless class. Um, I know that I I I didn’t take it this semester.” Student 9 expressed:

And they said that this semester it was going to be like more involved but last semester it was mostly sort of doing like random pointless stuff, like wearing the little uh pedometer around. Which I which actually was cool to know how many steps I took every day. But other than that it was kinda pointless.
Student 11 stated:

I don’t feel like I really got anything out of it but I think it’s cool like the research that they got from it I guess. They could probably do something with it but like me individually it didn’t make really a difference to me. [laugh] We didn’t meet that much.

Student 3 stated:

That was not my funniest experience. I think the program was like so geared towards health majors that it was like I don’t know you know PRTM health plays into the part. But I am not going to like when it became optional I was not going to put in the effort because it didn’t really apply to me. But I mean it was interesting like for that first semester…. like there asking a freshman group to do look at a creative inquiry but we barely got like the college learning process down you can’t really expect us to understand creative inquiry part. We are use to regurgitating facts at you not coming up with our own ideas. And making them into action on campus. That is not something they taught you in high school. So I think that concept went over our heads at times.

Student 2 said:

I didn’t really appreciate just being put in the HEHD class without like any sort of fair warning from when I had joined the living learning community I mean it was like totally fine and it was a good experience once I got into it but it was I wish that they would have like told me that was a part of the living-learning community before hand so. I felt that was one thing.

The class consisted of several competitions. Student 2 said, “And then we had different health challenges we had to fulfill over like 3 week periods. And um, that was a lot of that.” Student 2 also said:

She like all the other RAs participated with us. And um, I think she teamed up with the RAs against us as sort of a challenge to see who could get the most steps and it was just different competitions like that in order to get people to participate more.

Student 2 said:

I mean it was largely a lot of the challenges were individual but I mean um, I had a lot of people when we had to run the mile. In the beginning you know we kept
pace with each other and that kinda thing in order to just keep going and like get it over with.

Student 1 in the first interview noted:

We were all signed up for like this required class and umm. It actually uses uhh experiment uhh like subjects for them to test. Uhmm. Let’s see they had a pedometer on us. For one experiment they had given us a nutrition challenge.

Student 8 explained:

What the focus is is really alright alright let me say that we did a few projects where they were all involved with little competitions and each of the projects would be like we had the pedometers to see how many steps you could get. And different things that you don’t really think about during the day, like at the end of the day your legs might be tired but you’ve when you get that pedometer you’re like look I list many steps I got. And then you record that in just a little competition among everyone. So it’s giving like an aspect that everyone likes into something that people don’t really think about as much. So like, cause now that in college it’s just easy to eat whatever. But when you have HEHD helping you out as a class then you can record data about like what if you want to lose weight or if you want to like gain muscle or something you can do it.

Student 6 expressed:

Well it was different than what I expected it to be. Um, like at the beginning they told us we was going to have challenges and we were put into groups. And I kinda thought it was like we were put into groups and I thought it was like a team thing. Like we’re, like more hands on, like like more physical, like you do team activities and things like that. But it wasn’t really it was more like individually like individual thing. And you I mean it was related to your health because we um we had a pedometer challenge where um we recorded how many steps we took. Well cause they gave us a pedometer and who ever had the highest they got a prize. And things like that. Um, but I kinda thought it was I guess basic, I guess I just thought it was just more team thing.

Student 14 explained:

Well at first it just felt like I was kinda excited because it was just a class an be easy credit and they were just going to give us you know little things to do. But you know when we started doing the tasks that we had to do you know the assessments and the um challenges with our we had a pedometer. And we had to try eat so many fruits and vegetables a day like I actually got you know useful information out of that on how I can make my how I can be a better person. You know with my with my wellness. I got a lot out of that I think.
Student 2 said:

I think it was largely more self motivated on my part I’m not a terribly competitive person I just I don’t know that kinda thing doesn’t really motivate me but um you know uh it was still a good experience.

Through the competitions students were able to assess their health. Student 7 in the first interview explained:

I think the pedometer project. Probably just because at first I thought it was going to be really annoying because I had to wear it everyday. And somedays it was depending on what I was wearing you could see it. So I thought people might think it was kinda weird or something. But I also found it to be like really good goal actually every day to try to get 10,000 steps and like depending on if I worked out or not where that number would be. And so it really help me gauge my exercise and stuff.

Student 2 noted, “there weren’t any test it was more of just writing assessments for different activities.” Student 2 noted:

I mean I wouldn’t say it was for the people who participated largely the academic other than the writing portion of it, it was more just um assessing like our health and that kinda thing. And then they used that for a study, I am not really sure what they used it for though.

Catherine’s role within the class was designed by the administrators for her to only be a participant. However, Catherine took on the role of Teaching Assistant out of her own free will. The living-learning community administrator stated Catherine overstepped her bounds:

what we did was we uh gave the RAs and Catherine an option of being their own class section. And so they were. So they were participants in the course. Um, I think it may have functioned better had they not been actual participants. Um, but may have been involved in another way. Um, but we did do some health challenges, like they would track their steps, they would compete against each other. So in that sense they were doing the same things as the students. Uh and in you know in comparing your RAs and Catherine took this many steps this week how many steps did your team take. You know or so that we were wanting to set
it up where they were involved and felt like they were doing some of the same things. Uh and getting some of the same benefits so. But I think you know again to just add on to the question I think Catherine saw herself more as a TA. And that wasn’t what we were intending. So there was a disconnect there as well.

The living-learning community administrator continued by stating that Catherine was a middle person for the students and administration:

…has happened several times is her coming back to me or one of us in this office and saying hey this is a specific need that we have right now. Here’s what’s going on an uh we need x, y, or z uh and you know can we make this happen.

Here is what students had to say about her role within the class. Student 7 in the first interview said, “we did the class together and she was a good person there kind of a good role model I would say for that aspect.” Student 2 stated, “I know um she made sure we were all pretty heavily involved in that study done last semester um with the HEHD 199 class. And um she helped with that.” Student 12 stated:

She was basically like the rest of us even the RAs we were just all like in this class together. The people who were the head of like um Will Mayo and Susan Pope they were the leaders of it. And that was it all of us were just kind of sitting there in a class.

Student 8 noted:

Well um she I she pretty much acts as act acted as one of the RAs in a sense. Um she would there would be certain group leaders who were not, who I don’t see around the building as much but I see them in the events in in the common room but not the RAs. And Like William Mayo and um the rest I can’t remember their names but the rest of them. And they would have individual groups and in the individual groups you would have one or two RAs. And they just kind of serve as the assistant to that person in a sense. Maybe not doing everything for them but together like they were the two leaders of the group.

Student 3 stated:

They explained to her at first she was suppose to be like our link between like the HEHD college and like all that is going on there and us. So like if we did not understand something then we would go to her but I think she would even like
more as we got to know her better as like an emotional tool. Like This is what you are going to go through your first year as an HEHD student like these like this is the dean like you know get to know him, tips that like only somebody who went through the HEH HEHD process would like understand.

Student 3 also stated:

But there was a lot of the professors and us had a lot of communication issues and Catherine dealt with all of them. We would be like Catherine we don’t know what is going on with this email and she would be on the phone with them what are you talking about that you send out this email and like it was just a little bit frustrating.

Student 6 explained:

She was like one of the people we could come to like if we had a question. Oh like I lost my pedometer, so I asked her what I should do and um things like that. She answered question and she was just like, If we had a questions about the class or about one of the challenges we could ask her.

Student 14 noted:

She you know we she made sure that we you know did everything we were suppose to. She you know reminded us when class was meeting because we only met a couple of times a semester. She reminds us when we went she would you know get us together before we were getting ready to go um she sent out emails reminding us of you know our assignments and stuff that were due. She was um very on top of things in making sure that we were on top of things too.

Student 13 explained:

She was more of like an organizer sort of person like um, I guess you could say like she kinda was like the round up of like getting people to go to it. And like making sure that like when we had our meeting she was the one who like made sure that everybody went and she um and she would document who couldn’t come for whatever reason and then and then I have like other meetings but I didn’t miss any meetings but I think they had other meetings for people who missed. So, like she was like she was like reporting administration those. And then um she she was sort of like in it with us so she was doing the same sort of stuff. Like she was doing the same activities we were. Which sort of like helped us out a little bit because felt like we have somebody to go to if we had like questions or things like that. She help she would sort of like a mediate uh a communication resource between us and the faculty rather than us talking directly to the faculty. We could talk to her and she would relay like what what our
concerns were with the faculty that was running it. So it helped out to have have her to make that transition because sometimes it can be like sort of intimidating for like a student to especially a freshmen to like go to a professor and talk to them about something. So, it’s with her having her to like balance that and allow us to talk to talk to them indirectly helped out that way. She she was just like like sort of like the backbone I guess of the whole thing really.

Student 7 in the first interview stated:

She took the class with us. And so um she did everything we were doing. She had to do all the assignments everything like that. I would say she was a role model definitely for that class. And also she connected with the teacher communicated with the teacher, so if there were any if there was any confusion with the class or assignment she always found out and um since it was the first time the class was being held and it was first semester freshman year for a lot of us. I think that not everyone was comfortable communicating with the teachers like she was. And so she really stepped in to help people out and showed that they could do it too. So I think she was a really good role model in that area.

Student 8 noted:

she was one of the RAs or she was with the RAs when we all had to go to the different meetings together as a class. And she acted as if she was like a teaching assistant which is nice because to have someone that knows the material that may not be perceived as like ahead of a class and can just help you out and with things like that. She did a real good job of that.

Student 8 also noted:

She helped out with the class in the fall. And she had a good experience from what I could see with anyone that was above her in leadership in that class or equal with her. And that relationship they had would like, would bring us to a good relationship with her and then everyone was pretty much working well together. We didn’t really have any problems with the group learning.

Student 11 said, “I just know she did it with us. She didn’t really promote it or anything.” Student 9 said, “well I know she had to take it. Along with the rest of us and that was pretty much it.” Student 10 stated, “She was a student just like us. She had to take the class and do all the assignments that we had to do.”
After taking the class, some students became more health conscious. Student 2 noted, “you know it opens your eyes to just different things you may or may not do through the week that’s like you wouldn’t be aware of otherwise.” Student 2 also noted, “I hated PE all through high school so when I was told we had to run the mile I wasn’t to thrilled about it but I mean I run more now than I did then so you know.” Student 8 expressed:

It was kind of a class that kept, kept you health conscious as your cause I mean as a freshman everyone knows about the freshman 15 and stuff. And I don’t think that was really the focus but it kept you thinkin’ about what your doing that you don’t realize your doing until the end of the day when like man I shouldn’t of had that piece of pizza or something. You don’t think about getting’ that glass of water over a soda and it’s just something that kinda your thinking about that class whenever you have a meeting come up for it and your thinking about being more health conscious like oh I mean if I want to get a good grade like I want like I actually practice what I am doing in the class like in my real life. So that’s nice.

Student 13 expressed:

I feel like it it helps you like it helps you sort of transition a little bit and helped you like put into perspective what’s going on and like in your daily life while your at college like how your food like how you deal with food. And like how what you eat and stuff like that like you don’t really think about it when you’re doing it but like if you reflect on it it’s sort of a whole different aspect of it.

Student 13 also expressed:

It was an interesting experience. Um, I feel I feel like it was a good experience to like get to like know how where you are like health wise. And and it was it was cool to see like how how many steps you like take every day that not something like you think about when you are doing it but when you put it in perspective like it’s it’s funny to see in in sort interesting to see like how much you actually like walk every day.

In the spring semester, the students were given the opportunity to participant in a creative inquiry class. This spring class was not required like the fall class. The students
who took this class enjoyed it because of the opportunity to give back to the community and to connect with their future occupations. Student 12 stated, “I didn’t mind doing what we were doing. But I can honestly say I like this semester a lot better because closer and it’s more involved in something productive.”

Student 13 described how the class second semester was smaller than the first semester class:

I just think like if if you took it in the right way because I feel like there’s there’s definitely a lot people because it was like like two floors of people. Last semester and now its only like six or seven people or eight people or something like that. So I mean I feel like there was a lot of people that were in there just because because they thought like cause they had to be sort of. And a lot of them didn’t have the right outlook

Student 13 also said:

I just figured that I mean it’s a one hour class it’s not like a huge commitment you don’t have to like dedicate like hours of time too it. It’s just something that you can do and I feel like it will it will help me in my major cause I’m a health science major, so if if you deal if you deal with that then if you deal with like health on campus then that’s sort of like exactly what I’m going to be doing and and for the rest of my four years and just like seeing how that is affects on campus is just a good reflection so I guess that’s kind of why. And yeah it’s a big help.

Student 12 noted:

I am glad I am apart of it because it’s called this semester a creative inquiry class which I was interested in taking at some point in college. And now is a good time to get started. But with this semester we are trying to start a wellness program, mainly a website right now to spread awareness around the campus. So that’s our main focus for this semester hopefully by next fall we’ll have that started and possibly be a part of it in the future too. Like presenting this idea to the HEHD college and maybe the whole school.
Student 7 in the first interview stated:

This semester it’s the creative inquiry so it’s not you got to sign up if you wanted to do it or not. And it’s not so much a class as like a research community. So, now we’re looking more into health and wellness and what we can do on the campus to help that area. Um, I thought that the whole health and wellness idea was pretty cool and I think that being involved in the college and the creative inquiry part is worthwhile. That I can gain experience and knowledge and I don’t know. I think that will be something to reflect on and share and hopefully we’ll do something worthwhile with our time. So, I thought it was cool being a freshman and getting the opportunity to be a part of.

Student 14 expressed:

I also think that I’ve come to you know study group and now I’m meeting people with similar interest as me to that I have and we can you know do do similar things like um right now we’re in a creative inquiry group that started out as um a class that everyone in HEHD started in but now it’s just you know the creative inquiry it’s it’s down to like nine people in the class. But you know just being in HEHD we’re able to do stuff like that.

Student 12 was asked if she had not lived in the LLC would she have known about the creative inquiry class and she stated, “I don’t think so no. Not at all.” Student 7 in the second interview noted:

We actually last week we had a poster presentation. With all the other creative inquiries for HEHD. And um, so that was pretty exciting. And we actually finished that I mean for that for this semester. So I think they are going to carry it on next semester too. Um well what we decided to do was make these modules which is their doing a project for the Clemson website homepage where every person can have their own homepage basically and it’s like on google how if you have a google homepage you can pick different links to have on the front page. So we’re going to make some health ones to have on the front page for students.

Student 12 noted the faculty connection made within this class as “the only faculty we worked with were the people who led it the HEHD CI. So that’s our only faculty connection we had.” The academic milieu environment created allowed for
students to prepare for assignments, interact with faculty and eased them together as a community in order to increase learning and health awareness.

The environments created in the living-learning community included: expectations, transitions, physical, someone’s there, connections, and academic performance. The different environments were created and espoused by the students because of the characteristics of Catherine.

**Decision Making**

The decision making category illustrates both how and why the students made the decisions they did on a day-to-day basis. Students expressed they had to make decisions when it came to academics and extracurricular experiences. Students also stated they took into consideration future implications, self-interest, their parent’s thoughts, and the encouragement of the peer mentor. Figure 4 depicts the influences on decision making.
Figure 4. Decision Making of Residents

- Parents
  - Personal Desires
- Characteristics of Peer Mentor
- Environment of LLC
- Same Major
- Decision Making of LLC Residents
  - Day-to-day Decisions
  - Future Decisions
Student 2 noted that the HEHD 199 class has changed her day-to-day decision of exercise, “I hated PE all through high school so when I was told we had to run the mile I wasn’t too thrilled about it but I mean I run more now than I did then so you know.”

Student 8 stated how the HEHD 199 class caused him to think more about the decisions he was making:

What the focus is is really alright alright let me say that we did a few projects where they were all involved with little competitions and each of the projects would be like we had the pedometers to see how many steps you could get. And different things that you don’t really think about during the day, like at the end of the day your legs might be tired but you’ve when you get that pedometer you’re like look I list many steps I got. And then you record that in just a little competition among everyone. So it’s giving like an aspect that everyone likes into something that people don’t really think about as much. So like, cause now that in college it’s just easy to eat whatever. But when you have HEHD helping you out as a class then you can record data about like what if you want to lose weight or if you want to like gain muscle or something you can do it. You know like HEHD can help you out with like Fike and stuff like that. So, it’s nice having those there.

Student 12 noted how she was making decisions in her class with the future in perspective:

I am glad I am apart of it because it’s called this semester a creative inquiry class which I was interested in taking at some point in college. And now is a good time to get started. But with this semester we are trying to start a wellness program, mainly a website right now to spread awareness around the campus. So that’s our main focus for this semester hopefully by next fall we’ll have that started and possibly be a part of it in the future too. Like presenting this idea to the HEHD college and maybe the whole school.

Student 7 expressed how living in the living-learning community and how he reflects and thinks about the creative inquiry class will be applied in a worthwhile manner:

thought that the whole health and wellness idea was pretty cool and I think that being involved in the college and the creative inquiry part is worthwhile. That I can gain experience and knowledge and I don’t know. I think that will be something to reflect on and share and hopefully we’ll do something worthwhile.
with our time. So, I thought it was cool being a freshman and getting the opportunity to be a part of.

Student 14 explained how she was doing things now that hopefully would benefit her in the future:

Well I thought that what we did first semester was interesting. I just wanted to carry it over and it’ll look good in the future. And I think I will be able to use it use it more in the future. My major’s health science and health promotion education so it’s really right up what I’m you know right up the alley what I’m studying. I thought that you know would really help me prepare for stuff I would look to do in the future.

Student 2 noted how Catherine was helping her make decisions about study abroad:

And I had planned on studying abroad when I talked with her last and she helped me in umm, just letting me know what I needed to do inorder to make that happen. Cause for a nursing major especially um we have very specific requirements for courses that we have to fulfill and so like it is a very small window of opportunity that we have too do that. So she was helpful to help me figure that out.

Students realized decisions had to be made about what they were going to do for the rest of their lives. Some of them changed majors after realizing what they were doing was not what they wanted to do. Student 8 noted:

I was in the professional golf management program but I realized after orientation that I wasn’t really gonna want to follow that and I just switched into Parks and conservation area management and I’m actually not really sure if that’s actually want to do. I think I’m going to be switching into graphic communications. But but for now um and for this past two semesters I’ve been great. I mean I love this school work I just don’t know if it’s what I want to go into after this but I like everyone in the building they help me out with getting homework done and stuff trying to.

Student 11 stated:

I well now I’m a psychology major but I was a health science major. And I figured it would be better to like live with someone that is in my major to like help me out and stuff. And I thought it was a cool concept. Psychology, Um well
I really interested in health but like I want to counsel. And I decided I like would rather do that.

Student 11 when asked is living in the LLC different now having changed majors responded:

Not really because we like I expected like oh I’m going to live with people in my major we’re going to study together. That didn’t really happen. Like I still made friends with them but it’s not really like study buddies.

The researcher had a unique opportunity to interview Student 5 who lived in one of the living-learning community rooms but did not have a living-learning community major. Student 5 when asked what the living experience had been like living on a hall where her major was different than everyones responded, “probably just the same as anywhere else because there’s another girl on my hall that is an architecture major so she is not in it either. And it’s not really really noticeable.” The researcher observed Student 5 with others in the living-learning community at events and activities. However, observations where residents avoided student 5 at programs says the opposite.

Some students made decision based on thinking of themselves. Student 10 stated:

It was actually my third choice. Um, I think or maybe it was my second choice. Um, I I I I honestly wanted to live in one of the high rises but um I got put in here as my second choice. I just I was just like oh LLC that’s you know that’s my major I’ll just click it. I was kinda doing my my application at the last minute.

Student 13 noted, “I kinda like stay to myself and just deal with my own troubles.”

Student 9 explained:

Here’s this girl in nursing Amy not Amy, sorry Hope. No Racheal. Hope is her middle name. who uh she um she wanted to drop out so she was like talking to me about it. And I like accidentally said something to her I didn’t want too. And I wanted to go apologize to her but this girl was in a lot of you know like a distraught emotional state. So Catherine was like trying to help her and she did help her. But and then like um I wanted to go apologize to her because I
accidentally called her crazy. So, um then Catherine was like no you shouldn’t do that. I was like Catherine this does have anything to do with you

Parents were involved in some of the decision making to pursue living in the

community. Student 13 expressed:

Honestly, my mom. My mom told me my mom my mom thought that it would be better for me because like the way I cause of my academic and like stuff like I focus on that at first and she thought that if I was like in a big dorm then I would all the other distractions would be like like on me a lot and for the most part she’s right because um like people in Byrnes and stuff like their doors are always open theres people coming and going and and in Mauldin like it’s a lot like more settled down and you and the the main thing that I like about it is you you’re not disrupted in your room, like if you want to go in your room and study you can do that rather than like having to like go to the library or something. Because I because there is not like that constant interruption of like people coming and going and it just helps to be able to do it. Like a smaller community like you see everybody every day and you you get to know that know that them to an extent and it’s just more comforting and I mean if I probably would have done it myself if I knew about it but she she always like she get’s it right usually for what that I need so she she she was the reason why I joined it.

Peer mentor encouraged positive decision making to benefit others. Student 10 stated:

She does encourage us to do well in in our classes but also like um just like not doing drugs and alcohol. Like we did that class the HEHD 199. We did that together and so in that whenever we were working in groups or whatever we were meeting for that class we would talk about you know being as healthy as possible because we are nursing majors and we need to live out what we you know do in our profession. Um, and I guess just along that basis like not drinking and not doing drugs and being healthy and exercising.

Student 3 explained:

I mean in a way like the other girls on my hallway have become mentors. Because we all have our moments where we like hit rock bottom and there and then like they step in and kinda act like little Catherine’s. like I don’t know like they there like they know what to say because she has helped them. And they are like lets talk about this. So like I think in a way like we have all had a point where we have had to be like ok let’s channel our inner Catherine. Let’s see what’s wrong. And like that you know is cause she’s helped us and it is our turn to help somebody else.
Decision making was made by the students based on not just their self-awareness but through interactions with the peer mentor and environment they lived and played in. The next section provides a summation of the entire grounded theory of how residents interacted with their peer mentor.

**Summation of How Living-Learning Community Members Interacted with their Peer Mentor**

The following section is an explanation of the grounded theory which answers the research question: How do living-learning community members interact with their peer mentor? The researcher described three themes that explained the residents’ interactions with their peer mentor which included: (1) characteristics of the peer mentor, (2) the environment of the living-learning community, and (3) the decision making of the residents.

**Characteristics of the Peer Mentor**

Characteristics of the peer mentor were used to describe both academic and social areas of the students’ experiences within their living-learning community and how the students interacted with their peer mentor. Participants described how Catherine cared about them by providing examples of actions and words she used both inside and outside the classroom. Catherine’s attitude of caring created trust with the residents which in turn helped the residents feel comfortable. Catherine also was able to encourage residents and be a resource within the realm of academics by helping students with scheduling classes, homework assignments, and connections to faculty in the residence hall. Students also felt comfortable and relaxed because Catherine was a peer and
experienced in the college environment. Catherine being a role model and hard worker inspired the students to be the best they could be both academically and socially. Students were encouraged when Catherine would notice their accomplishments in different contexts within the university community. Catherine’s caring demeanor and being a resource for the residents provided an example that the residents then used to help one another if Catherine was not available. These characteristics were woven into, and helped to create, the environment of the living-learning community.

**Environment of the Living-Learning Community**

The environment of the living-learning community was created by physical location, residents’ expectations and transitions, and the characteristics of the peer mentor. These aspects contributed to the students’ academic success and their connections with one another outside of the classroom. Students described living in the residence hall with Catherine and their friends as critical to their interactions with one another and the university community. The close physical proximity allowed the community to develop more quickly and deeply than it would have otherwise.

Residents came into the living-learning community experience with expectations, some of which were reinforced by their parents. These expectations guided how the students viewed the peer mentor as well as the transitional moments within the semester. The beginning of the year and being away from home was a transition from high school to college. Residents also faced academic transitions involving changing their major. These transitions were part of the environment of the living-learning community.
Some characteristics of the peer mentor, along with physical aspects of the environment, served to create an environment of availability of the peer mentor. This availability was described in context of both characteristics as well as location, with an example being Catherine regularly sitting by the front door of the building. Students knew, even though some of them might not have approached her, that Catherine was available to them for academic or social concerns or questions.

Another environment the students talked about was one of relationships with one another, the peer mentor, involvement in community activities, and academics. Some students also stated that they kept to themselves because they did not need the interactions of others. Relationships with other people or individuality were interrelated to the connections students made inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

Finally, academic milieu was a subcategory that emerged from the students’ stories. Students stated that Catherine was an encourager, resource, and role model for them and these attributes created an environment of academic support and challenge. Students spoke of these characteristics of Catherine as reasons they were able to not only survive but succeed in their first year of college. Students across the board stated Catherine was a significant help to the residents within her major, nursing. Some students reported that Catherine had no impact on their academic performance but their expectations and having personal drive to overcome transitions led to them to succeed academically.

All students had to take the HEHD 199 class in their first semester living in the community. This frustrating class environment forced students to reflect upon what they
wanted to take away from their college experience. This class encouraged students to think about future decisions. Some went on to participate in the class in the second semester when it was not required. Both the characteristics of the peer mentor and the environments explained by the students were related to how the students processed and made decisions.

**Residents’ Decision Making**

The decision making category is understood through the interrelated connections of the peer mentor’s characteristics and living-learning community environment. Students had to balance their day-to-day decisions by processing their parental expectations, individual beliefs for the present and future, and the encouragement of the peer mentor to make good decisions. Most students were already thinking about the future by making decisions to change majors, study abroad, or intentionally engage in certain extracurricular activities. Decision making seemed to be a hard process for the students as they were balancing ideas from parents, friends, and Catherine as well as starting to define for themselves where they wanted to be in the future.

The story of the residents is one of interaction between the peer mentor and the community environment created. The residents had to balance their past experiences with their actual experience. Decisions were made by students to help themselves through transitions and difficult situations by using the peer mentor as a resource to think about their future. Catherine was given respect by most of the students based on her characteristics and the environment that was created. The decision making of what actions to take on a daily basis ultimately came down to each individual resident.
However, the role of the peer mentor and the community environment cannot be taken out of the picture when understanding the environment created.

**Implications of how the peer mentor affected the residents academically and socially**

The following section discusses the implication of the grounded theory which explains how the peer mentor affected the residents both academically and socially. This section responds to the two sub-research questions asked in this study which were: (1) How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members academically? and (2) How does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members socially? This section is intended to explain the grounded theory specific to the research site in the context of academic and social arenas.

**Academically**

The grounded theory from this study explains how residents process and make decisions based on the characteristics of the peer mentor and environment of the living-learning community. One difficulty in the academic realm was the issue of scheduling; students did not understand the process or even what classes to take. The peer mentor provided an informal avenue for the students to get advice by asking questions and observing the peer mentor’s techniques for navigating scheduling. Peer mentors who are knowledgeable about basic processes of the university either through training or from their own experiences may serve as a natural resource on questions of academic protocol.

The peer mentor was a nursing major. Students of different majors came to Catherine for help. All students, nursing and non-nursing acknowledged, Catherine was more of a benefit for the students in her specific major because of the specific help she
was able to provide the students related to academic resources. The students who were non-nursing majors looked on the nursing students in the living-learning community with a degree of jealousy because Catherine was able to relate and help those students with greater insight. Catherine understood the classes that needed to be taken and the extracurricular groups to either be involved in or not be involved with. Catherine was so knowledgeable she was able to help the students learn how to fit a study abroad semester into a full nursing academic load. This aspect of academic support implies that residents may be best served by a peer mentor of the same major.

Catherine provided an informal avenue for helping students interact with the faculty and staff of the college. At the beginning of the year, Catherine worked closely with the college to have faculty be in the hall on move-in day. Catherine was touted as connecting students with the faculty on that first day. Residents felt more at ease during the advising luncheons held in the residence hall because Catherine helped calm residents and relieve nerves so that students could have productive conversations with the advisors about any questions they had during the previous month. These meeting and interactions gave the students confidence to interact with the faculty and staff by themselves towards the end of the second semester. Catherine also interacted with the residents in the required HEHD 199 class held in the fall semester. The students relied on Catherine as the go between for students and college. Catherine modeled in this class how to appropriately communicate with the professor. The students let Catherine do all the communicating for this class. However, students used this model that Catherine provided them to communicate with other faculty members throughout their other classes. These
were clear examples of how the peer mentor brought students and faculty together to enhance the learning process. From the example Catherine provided in regards to communicating with faculty, it is evident that the peer mentor is not solely responsible for academic mentoring, but can create meaningful connections for academic enhancements and deeper faculty/student relationships. Further research is still needed to understand the scope of the peer mentor’s role in academic support.

Finally, there were residents who did not seek Catherine out for academic help. These students attributed their parents or their internal drive to succeed as reasons for not interacting with Catherine for academic help. From this it is evident that not all students will benefit from a peer mentor, but overwhelmingly students were positively impacted academically by the peer mentor relationship.

**Socially**

Residents of the living-learning community interacted with the peer mentor through social interactions as they did for academic interactions. Catherine provided avenues for students to connect with those residents living close to one another. On move-in day, Catherine was seen connecting students with similarities. This continued during the school year through activities and informal visits to students’ rooms. Catherine was able to help the students adjust from the transition from high school to college, from living at home to living away from home, and to learning how to live independently. Catherine was involved with programming for the community. Catherine’s involvement and dedication to these events provided opportunities for students to not only interact with Catherine but also interact with one another in the
community. These social interactions connected the students to one another which led to academic connections as well. Even the social aspect cannot be seen as separate from academics. Peer mentors who are willing to learn about the residents they mentor can serve as a resource connecting students with similar interests and ideas to create a closer community and greater interdependence among residents.

Some residents found they enjoyed being their own individual and not worrying about the community. Several residents spoke of not having time for the community because what they were interested in outside of the classroom was something different than what the community was offering during the out of class times. These stories were rare but noted because it is important to see how the community functioned as a whole.

The men in the professional golf management major had a connection that extended beyond the classroom. The non-golf management students noticed how this group had a connection that the other community members could not infiltrate. The golf management members came into the experience with the understanding they were not going to take classes together, but they were going to bond outside the classroom. One individual stated this was the reason he decided to come to the research site university.

Students stated it was nice having someone with the same outlook in life living with them that they could interact with outside of class. These connections and relationships were ones that allowed students to thrive both socially and academically. Through the example of Catherine, the students knew what was expected of them and began to help each other when Catherine was not around. The peer mentor
characteristics’ along with the environment helped the students make decisions to benefit them academically and socially.

Chapter Summary

Chapter four of this study provided an in depth look at the data analysis process, the presentation of the researcher’s finding, and finally discussed the answer to how the peer mentor’s interaction with the residents affected the academic and social environments of the students. The researcher described the data analysis procedures and provided details about the grounded theory methodology. The findings of the study were provided through both narratives of the participant’s words as well as through visual diagrams to explain the grounded theory. The researcher explained how the researcher used his own thoughts and interpretations to peer debrief, member check and data triangulation to insure data saturation. Finally, a summary explanation of the grounded theory and the implications for practical application was provided.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explain how college student residents interacted with their peer mentor in a select living-learning community for health science, nursing, education and professional recreation and tourism management majors. A theoretical model was developed to help explain and predict the above interactions, relationships, and environments observed. Chapter five includes the discussion on the theoretical implications of Greenleaf’s Servant Leadership Theory (1996) and Kohlberg’s Cognitive Moral Development Theory (1981) and the limitations of the study. In this final chapter, the researcher discusses the practical implications of the findings for higher education stakeholders as well as recommendations for future studies.

Theoretical Implications

The researcher used Greenleaf’s (1996) theory of servant leadership and Kohlberg’s (1981) theory of cognitive moral development as the underlying lens for this study. Both of these theories were used to create the research and interview questions for this study. At the conclusion of the study, elements of these theories were confirmed by the individual stories being told as well as the combined explanation of the stories as a whole. This study resulted in concepts and categorizations of the peer mentor characteristics, environment of the living-learning community and decision making of the residents.
Servant Leadership

At the core of the servant leadership theory is the cornerstone where followers trust that the leader believes in and puts the good of the community members over the individual needs of the leader (Greenleaf, 1996; 1998). Greenleaf (1996) identified ten characteristics that are the heart of a servant leader which include: (a) listening, (b) empathy, (c) restoration, (d) self-awareness, (e) persuasion, (f) focus on long-term goals, (g) foresight, (h) stewardship, (i) committing to growth of others, and (j) building community. This study validated these characteristics of a servant leader are valuable to building trust and helping a community grow.

The researcher found the peer mentor exemplified many of the characteristics of a servant leader. The residents gave examples of the peer mentor which described the peer mentor as caring, having a positive attitude, encouraging, experienced, available, and being a role model and resource. These characteristics along with the environments observed in the living-learning community confirm the tenets of servant leadership.

The first element of servant leadership is listening (Greenleaf, 1998). The peer mentor was described by the residents as a person who would engage in conversations and listen to issues and concerns of the residents. The peer mentor would listen and answer questions of the residents on a daily basis. Student 3 described the peer mentor as a “great listener”. The ability of the peer mentor to listen to the residents opened the door for an environment of approachability.

The second element of servant leadership is empathy (Greenleaf, 1998). The residents provided examples of how Catherine expressed academic empathy towards their
school work in general as well as in the HEHD 199 class that they all took together. The peer mentor was illustrated also as a person that could empathize with injury or being away from home. The peer mentor opened the door to build connections through relationships by recognizing the needs and wants of the residents.

The third element of servant leadership is restoration which means peace is desired with both individual as well as societal relationships (Greenleaf, 1998). From day one the peer mentor was described as an individual that introduced the residents to one another as well as the faculty and deans of the college. These connections and relationships were also facilitated at activities and programs as well as over informal advising sessions at lunch in the residence hall. The residents expressed that the peer mentor was a helpful, caring person who inspired an environment of building productive relationships within the community.

The fourth element is self-awareness (Greenleaf, 1998). The peer mentor understood her role and admitted up front that she was not focused on the community all the time. The peer mentor described times where she would just have to get away from the community because the residents were freshman and she was a senior. She was aware of her stress level and balanced her time in and out of the building appropriately. The peer mentor also was aware of where the students were developmentally and loved the opportunity to watch them grow throughout the year. This general awareness of the residents of the building and self-awareness of herself provided the avenue for her to be perceived as available.
The fifth element of a servant leader is using persuasion instead of power (Greenleaf, 1998). The residents described the peer mentor as a role model and hardworker. The peer mentor attested to the fact her position was one of collaboration as outlined in her position description which she took seriously. The peer mentor was reported by the residents and administration as a go between for the HEHD 199 class. The students described the peer mentor as instrumental in communicating with the faculty for this class. The administration stated that the peer mentor stepped over some bounds and was not suppose to be in the role of teaching assistant. The perceptions of the residents were one of consensus building. The administration noted that the peer mentor was using power to manipulate the system. The administration for the college did note this instance did bring the peer mentor and residents closer together. The conclusion is even though there were different perceptions on the right way to go about building trust the ultimate outcome was a closer bond between residents and the peer mentor through the struggling of communication with faculty in the HEHD 199 class first semester.

The sixth element of servant leadership is a focus on long-term goals focus and the seventh element is foresight (Greenleaf, 1998). The peer mentor helped students think through what decisions to make by looking ahead when it came to class schedules. She was able to help students think about organizations to join or how to incorporate study aboard into their college plans in order to help them once the students graduated. The peer mentor understood the importance of thinking about the future which was expressed in the explanations of the residents.
The eight element of servant leadership is stewardship (Greenleaf, 1998). The peer mentor noted she understood her role through the lens of stewardship. She described her position as one of responsibility for the students’ development inside and outside the classroom. This was a heavy burden to carry but Catherine was described by both the administration and students as a person who was intentional and authentic by placing the needs and concerns of the residents, and even the college, above her own. The peer mentor described her role as a delight and enjoyment to interact with the residents and see them grow over the course of the academic year.

This element of stewardship leads into the ninth element of a servant leader which is a commitment to the growth of others (Greenleaf, 1998). The peer mentor’s characteristics, as described by the examples given from the residents, show a commitment to helping the residents of the community grow. Residents described the peer mentor as a person who kept the development of the residents at the forefront of thoughts and showed this through actions such as answering questions, encouraging residents in their successes, and helping them through issues or low times.

The tenth element of a servant leader is building community (Greenleaf, 1998). Residents and administration alike praised the peer mentor for the efforts of building community. The administration saw how valuable the peer mentor was and stated that the informal connections that happened after hours when the full time staff could not be available was an invaluable component of the living-learning community. The residents described on day one as well as many other times throughout the semester on the floor, at programs, and other activities of how the peer mentor helped residents make connections.
with one another as well as academic relationships. The residents understood how valuable community building and helping one another is. Student 3 summarized how the peer mentor had role modeled community building that when the peer mentor was not there the residents realized “we have all had a point where we have had to be like ok let’s channel our inner Catherine “.

Two things must be noted about the implications of the theoretical lens. First, the peer mentor was not a perfect servant leader. The administration and several residents noted in their explanations of areas opposite of a servant leader. The administration stated that the peer mentor took on the role of teaching assistant in the HEHD 199 class at the beginning of the semester, when she was only supposed to be a student, which caused unnecessary challenges. Residents stated the peer mentor stepped in too much into situations when she was not needed.

Second, servant leadership is not limited to only the ten elements above. The heart of servant leadership is a person who will create and sustain genuine relationships in order to put the community good above themselves (Greenleaf, 1998). Overall, servant leadership was apparent of the peer mentor. The peer mentor’s characteristics and the environments of the living-learning community impacted the decision making of the residents.

**Cognitive Moral Development**

Kohlberg’s study described six developmental stages within three moral levels to understand how people make moral judgment decisions of right versus wrong. The first moral level was Pre-conventional, (i) Stage One: Obey rules to avoid punishment (ii)
Stage Two: Hedonistic orientation. The second moral level was Conventional, (iii) Stage Three: Conformity to avoid disapproval (iv) Stage Four: Abiding by the social order. The third moral level was Post-conventional, (v) Stage Five: Respect of other’s rights (vi) Stage Six: Altruism (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Kohlberg, 1981; Rich & DeVitis, 1985). Individuals in the pre-conventional level avoid punishment and try to gain rewards that will benefit themselves. Individuals in the conventional level try to win approval of those around them and conform to doing their duty so that they can maintain the expectations of the society. The post-conventional level is the hardest stage to enter in as there is an idea of thinking not just about oneself but respecting the rights of others where equality is actualized (Rich & DeVitis, 1985). These levels and stages were created to facilitate moral development instead of creating a list of fixed moral commandments (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; Rich & DeVitis, 1985).

The residents of the community made decisions which are described in this study through the lens of the characteristics of the peer mentor and the environment created. In the descriptions and stories of the students, decision making happened on many different levels and was sometimes incongruent with Kohlberg’s theory. Students made decisions based on personal desires, parents’ desires, expectations, transitions, day-to-day vs. future implications, and encouragement from the peer mentor. The researcher expected to see decisions only made with motivation for individual persons only. Students made decisions that were based on both personal desires as well as understanding decisions they made affected those around them. However, it needs to be
noted that most of the students made decisions based on how their peer mentor encouraged them or what they thought was best for themselves to benefit their future.

**Environmental theory**

At the conclusion of the study, the researcher realized environmental theory would have been more appropriate of a lens to use instead of cognitive moral development. Environmental theory included (a) physical environments such as design and space, (b) aggregate environments such as human characteristics, (c) organizational environments, and (d) constructed environments such as different people looking at situations differently (Strange & Banning, 2001). Environmental theory purported there are levels to creating environments that have educational success (Strange & Banning, 2001). The purposes of the environment have to be understood from three lens: (1) promoting safety and inclusion, (2) involvement, and (3) community (Strange & Banning, 2001). Environmental theory should be used in the future as a theoretical lens to understand the grounded theory of this study.

**Limitations**

The first limitation of this study is that the results are not generalizable. One specific living-learning community was observed during this research study. The study focused on the interactions between the peer mentor and residents of a living-learning community in part of one building that had a focus on health, education, and human development. Another similar limitation was the students that were interviewed were freshmen in a period of transition, adjustment, and at lower developmental stages, and this could be the reason these concepts emerged from this study.
The researcher struggled at the beginning to get participants from the initial email that was sent to the students. The researcher used two other methods after the initial email to get participants. The first was going to the creative inquiry class in the second semester to get participants. Second, the researcher asked participants that had already participated to give names of individuals that were interested in being in the study. These two methods could potentially limit the scope of details and concepts in the stories described by participants.

The overall length of time each interview lasted was short. These brief interviews created a limitation. The researcher used data triangulation to overcome this limitation to make sure the interviews, documents, and observations were being analyzed.

The researcher trusted that what students were describing was the truth and that they were not holding back information or making up something that they thought the researcher wanted to hear. The researcher could not be in the community to observe every interaction that happened on a daily basis, and it was not possible for the researcher to see everything that happened with interactions between the residents and the peer mentor. Also member checking was accomplished strictly via email. As such, the researcher also trusted that the participants read the email and responded if they noticed a mistake in the researcher’s explanation of their story.

The role of the researcher should also be noted as a limitation to the study from the aspect that the researcher is a novice and had contact with the living-learning community as a housing professional that was responsible for the building where the living-learning community was located during the beginning stages of the study. The
researcher took precautions to work with his dissertation committee to debrief the concepts from the analysis. The researcher picked the community because it was a convenient sample and a population that was of interest. The benefit to this limitation was that the researcher was able to have a deeper knowledge of the inner working of the community and able to understand the residents’ stories because of the detailed knowledge of the happenings in the community.

**Practical Implications**

This study provided some important implications for policy and practice. This section will be divided into academic policy and practice implications and social practice implications.

**Academic Implications**

Participants who were of the same major stated they felt supported by the peer mentor. Participants who were not in nursing commented and even stated at times they wanted to be a nursing major to get the help that the nursing major participants received from the peer mentor. In developing of future living-learning communities, the researcher would recommend the academic and student affairs stakeholders recruit and hirer peer mentors who have the same major as the students living in a living-learning community.

The peer mentor was a resource to the students in the living-learning community. The residents used the peer mentor to help them with class scheduling. This help consisted of helping students think through which classes to take as well as how to fit internships and study abroad into their academic plans. The peer mentor should be
trained on academic courses offered for the specific majors they would work with in the living-learning community. Knowing it is impossible to know everything, the peer mentor should be given campus resources to direct students too if the peer mentor did not know the answer.

Two practical implications came from the required HEHD 199 class. The academic administration should not surprise students with a mandatory class that is required for students after they have registered for the living-learning community. The administration should advertise this requirement when they are recruiting for participants to join. This study found when the class was optional to students who joined the class cared about what was being accomplished and then dedicated time to accomplishing the tasks. In the future, the class could be offered as an option, in order to get students who will take the class seriously.

The second practical implication is to include the peer mentor as part of the class. The peer mentor was stated by participants as being a good role model of communication with the faculty and good role model in teaching the students how to do the communication with their professors for the course. The role of the peer mentor in this class does not matter as much as involving the peer mentor in the class, so that the peer mentor can be a role model for the students. So, in short, stakeholders have to be aware about what they are asking the peer mentor to do, how they are asking the peer mentor to do it, how residents will perceive the peer mentor role(s), and how this will affect the overall tenor of the relationship and environment.
Social Implications

This study found that the environment was a critical foundation to how the peer mentor and residents interacted with one another. The close proximity to both individual peers and more importantly the peer mentor provided participants with a sense of security. The informal peer mentor interactions after hours, when students could not reach an administrator, were invaluable to students. Peer mentors should live in the building to provide a resource for students when faculty and staff are not available.

Both academic and student affairs practitioners need to be aware that environments are created within living-learning communities. These stakeholders should be intentional through design of the living-learning community and through selection and training of the peer mentor and others who will be involved. Understanding how to utilize the environments within the living-learning community can benefit the students both academically and socially as described in the explanation of this study.

Training of the peer mentor(s) in a living-learning community should consist of an overview of leadership theory and specifically discuss the characteristics outlined in this grounded theory. In this study, the students explained that the peer mentor’s characteristics set up opportunities and created environments for the students not only to succeed but also build lasting relationships with fellow peers and faculty. The peer mentor is not going to be perfect in the role defined on paper and created for them. Therefore, the hire authority in the selection process for the peer mentor position should recruit and select people with the characteristics listed in this study. The trust built between peer mentor and residents was a critical component that connected the
interactions between the characteristics of the peer mentor and the environment of the living-learning community which allowed for the residents to feel comfortable and succeed. Finally, when recruiting, selecting, or training a peer mentor, the students in this study felt they could trust the peer mentor because of her genuine characteristics.

Several students stated they never used the peer mentor, but they knew the peer mentor was a there for them if they needed her. The students thought they did not need help from the peer mentor or anyone for that matter from the college, but the students were struggling with transitions and how to navigate the college environment. From this study, the researcher observed the students who were saying they did not need help were those who were either thinking of changing majors, had changed majors, or were the students stating they were the most disconnected from the university. Living-learning community administrators should build in practical guidelines into the position description of the peer mentor(s). These guidelines should include ice breakers with small groups of students, rewards for participation in large group activities, and intentional structured one-on-one conversations between peer mentor and resident. The conversation should include asking about academic and social connections. Academic and student affairs partners must plan in the design of a living-learning community intentional ways to engage students, who think they do not need help, in community happenings.

The final practical implication is all people are different and come to the living-learning community with different life experiences. Understanding that students interact with both people and their environment differently based on how they have experienced
and learned life is critical. Flexibility is a must when planning and executing the living-learning community. All stakeholders involved with the living-learning community need to treat individuals as individuals and not a check-list. The students who stated they did not need helped wanted to separate the academic from the social components of college. Higher education practitioners have to understand the balance between trying to make sure our students are developing in all aspects of life and having fun. No training will be able to communicate or teach this point fully. It is critical through practice that the administration model flexibility for the peer mentor, so that students can have the most full positive experience possible.

**Recommendations for Future Studies**

While this study provided an example of how the peer mentor enhanced the community, replication of this study needs to be done. Research is needed on how peer mentors interact with students in living-learning communities that focus on majors different from health, education, and human development such as business, engineering, communications, and other liberal arts majors. Also, research on how a peer mentor interacts with students in living-learning communities at large versus small institutions.

Additional quantitative research will be helpful to narrow down which characteristics are most important for resident and peer mentor interaction. Also, quantitative research could be used to evaluate the interactions and academic performance, satisfaction, or retention. Also, a longitudinal study of peer mentor effect(s) needs to be addressed.
Since peer mentors are used in almost all living-learning community studied in the National Study for Living-Learning Programs, future research is needed on the effect a peer mentor has on the community as a whole as well as individuals. This research could be done through comparing and contrasting a living-learning community with a peer mentor to a living-learning community without a peer mentor.

As noted in this study, students made connections to other students in the living-learning community. Research is needed to address what role peer interactions play in affecting student’s decisions and environment. Do peers have more of an influence than a peer mentor? This question requires further study.

With the budget situation in higher education today, resources are at a minimum and universities are no longer doing “more with less”. Universities are having to do “less with less”. The literature on living-learning communities is abundant, but research on peer mentors is lacking. Do peer mentors increase the critical thinking of residents? Are residents more prepared for the next level after participating in a living-learning community with a peer mentor? Do residents say value was added to their degree after interacting with a peer mentor? These questions require further study.

This study discussed and explained from the residents’ stories how resident and peer mentor interactions created environments within the living-learning community. Further study is needed using environmental theory as a lens to study living-learning communities with or without a peer mentor.

Finally, a study comparing the impact of the Resident Assistant role versus the impact of a peer mentor role would be valuable. The researcher observed how the
participants in this study at times were confused about the differences between these
different roles.

**Conclusions**

Chapter five is the final chapter in this study. The researcher provided theoretical
implications of servant leadership and cognitive moral development. Limitations were
provided so that the research could be upfront and transparent. Finally, practical
implications and future research suggestions were discussed.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Research Site’s IRB Approval

January 5, 2011

Dr. Pamela Havice
Clemson University
Counselor Education
307 Tillman Hall
Clemson, SC 29634

SUBJECT: IRB Protocol # IRB2010-346, entitled “Residents’ Perceptions of Their College Living-Learning Community Peer Mentor: A Case Study”

Dear Dr. Havice:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Clemson University reviewed the above-mentioned study using Expedited review procedures and has recommended approval. Approval for this study has been granted as of January 5, 2011. Please find enclosed with this letter your original, stamped consent document[s] to be used with this protocol.

Your approval period is January 5, 2011 to January 4, 2012. Your continuing review is scheduled for January 2012. Please refer to the IRB number and title in communication regarding this study.

Attached are handouts regarding the Principal and Co-Investigators' responsibilities in the conduct of human research. The Investigator responsibilities handout should be distributed to all members of the research team. The Principal Investigator is also responsible for maintaining all signed consent forms (if applicable) for at least three (3) years after completion of the study.

No change in this approved research protocol can be initiated without the IRB's approval. This includes any proposed revisions or amendments to the protocol or consent form. Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects, any complications, and/or any adverse events must be reported to the Office of Research Compliance immediately. Please contact the office if your study has terminated or been completed before the identified review date.

The Clemson University IRB is committed to facilitating ethical research and protecting the rights of human subjects. Please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 656-6460 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Laura A. Moll, M.A., CIP
IRB Administrator

Encl.
Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What has been your most significant experience this year in your living-learning community?

2. What is the purpose of the Peer Mentor?
   2.a. How would you describe your Peer Mentor to a student who is new to the living-learning community?
   2.b. How would you characterize your relationship with your peer mentor?
   2.c. Provide a specific example of a positive interaction with your peer mentor.
   2.d. Provide a specific example of a negative interaction with your peer mentor.

3. How do the living-learning community members perceive Peer Mentors?

4. In what ways do peer mentors affect the academic performance of community members?

5. In what ways do peer mentors affect the social development of community members?

6. How do peer mentors facilitate faculty-student interactions within the living-learning community?

7. How do peer mentors facilitate peer interactions within the living-learning community?
Appendix C

Administrator Questions

1. Can you describe the HEHD college?
2. Why was the LLC created?
3. How has it changed?
4. What is the new direction for the community?
5. What are the core values or principles of the community?
6. What is the role of the peer mentor (copy of position description)?
7. Can you describe the training of the peer mentor?
8. Who supervises the peer mentor?
9. Why only 1 peer mentor?
10. Why do you believe the peer mentor is important?
11. When are upcoming programs so that I can attend?
12. Do you have any documents that I can take with me of when the community was created or what you are using now?
13. Do you have any websites you would direct me too?
Appendix D

Participant Profile Sheet

Name: _________________________

Email Address: ______________________________

Gender: Male   Female   Transgendered

Race/Ethnicity: __________________________

Major: ___________________________

Age: _____

Class Standing (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior): ______________

GPR: __________________
Appendix E

Consent Form

Information Concerning Participation in a Research Study
Clemson University

Residents’ Perceptions of their College Living-Learning Community Peer Mentor:
A Case Study

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Pam Havice and Mr. Jonathan Wylie. The purpose of this research is to better understand how residents in a living-learning community perceive their peer mentor.

Your participation will involve one, one-hour, one-on-one interview session with Mr. Jonathan Wylie, which will be digitally tape-recorded. Additionally, you may be asked later if you would like to be interviewed again as well as review your interview transcript.

The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately two total hours.

Risks and discomforts

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research project.

However, should you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can skip any questions and/or discontinue your participation in the study.

Potential benefits

There are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research.

This research may help us to understand how peer mentors help facilitate learning and personal growth for their residents in a living-learning community.

Protection of confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Typed transcripts, notes, and your Participant Profile Sheet will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the investigator’s private residence and/or office. Digital voice-recorded data and electronic copies of interview transcripts will be kept on the investigator’s password-protected computer. Physical data will be destroyed (shredded) following the culmination of the research project (one year after the research is complete). Participants will be assigned a number (i.e. “Student 1” using the Participant Profile Sheet) throughout the course of the study, and will be notified of this before proceeding with the interview process. The participant profile sheets will be kept in separate locked filing cabinets from the interview transcripts. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study.

This form is valid only if the Clemson University IRB stamp of approval is shown here:

[Stamp Image]

Page 1 of 2
In rare cases, a research study will be evaluated by an oversight agency, such as the Clemson University Institutional Review Board or the federal Office for Human Research Protections, that would require that we share the information we collect from you. If this happens, the information would only be used to determine if we conducted this study properly and adequately protected your rights as a participant.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Pam Havice at Clemson University at (864) 656-5121. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or info@clemson.edu.

A copy of this consent form should be given to you.
Appendix F

Member Checking: Phase One

Dear living-learning community resident,

I wanted to thank you for your participation in the HEHD living-learning community research study and let you know about where I am in the process.

I have finished transcribing your interview, typed your field notes, and have conducted a preliminary analysis of the data. Now I would like to invite you to offer any suggestions and feedback that you might have for me. Specifically, I am looking for your feedback of (1) the accuracy of your field notes and interview transcript from your interview, and (2) the categories, subcategories, and concepts I have seen emerge from the data.

I have attached three word documents to this email.

1. The first item if your transcription of your interview
2. The second item is a copy of your field notes. (note: these are my observations of our conversation)
3. The third item is a list of categories, subcategories, and concepts I have seen emerge thus far during data analysis. Here is a brief explanation of the categories.
   a. The ‘characteristics of the peer mentor’ included caring, positive attitude, encourager, peer, experienced, available, role model and resource. Catherine was describe as having these characteristics. The residents explained Catherine’s most important characteristic as being a resource and the other characteristics were crucial for her to be a resource. Even though some students did not use Catherine as a resource, they knew she was available to them for help.
   b. The ‘environment of the living-learning community’ included expectations of the residents, transitions faced by the residents, the physical environment, the peer mentor being approachable, connections made or not made with others, and academic performance. The environments created were partly from expectations coming into the community from themselves, parents, or friends in the community as well as experiences and interactions with the peer mentor. The residents living close to one another were an important concept that along with the characteristics of the peer mentor created an environment where the peer mentor was perceived as approachable. Connections and relationships with individuals, faculty, and staff was also a concept that was crucial to the make-up of the environment within Mauldin. Finally, academic environment that was created provided residents the opportunity to excel academically.
c. The ‘decision making’ of residents can only be explained by the characteristics of the peer mentor and the living-learning community environment. If any of those characteristics changed then the residents decision making patterns would change. The residents were faced with decisions in academics, change of major, being an individual, what their parents thought, as well as making decisions based on the encouragement of the peer mentor. Decision making was a complex and hard for the students to decide what to do. Decision making happened based on how the residents experienced the interaction with the environment and the peer mentor.

My goal is to have a draft of my final two chapters which will include my theoretical model for my study by early November. At this time, I will send the model to you in order to gather your feedback on the student to increase the validity of my study.

Once again, please know that I appreciate your help and time that you have put into my study. I look forward to receiving your feedback.

Grace and peace,
Wylie
Appendix G

Member Checking: Phase Two

Dear living-learning community residents,

I wanted to let you all know how much I appreciate all of your help and feedback up until this point. At this point, I have analyzed the data and created a visual diagram to explain the grounded theory that describes the residents’ interactions with their college living-learning community peer mentor. You will find the visual diagram attached to this email.

This email has two different parts. Part one is a summation of the grounded theory and part two discusses the implications of how the peer mentor affected the residents academically and socially.

Your feedback is encouraged and welcomed as the feedback allows me to critique the below narrative.

Part 1

**Summation of how Living-Learning Community Members interact with their Peer Mentor**

The following section is an explanation of the grounded theory which answers the research question: How do living-learning community members interact with their peer mentor? The researcher described three categories that explain the stories of the residents which included: (1) characteristics of the peer mentor, (2) the environment of the living-learning community, and (3) the decision making of the residents.

**Characteristics of the Peer Mentor**

Characteristics of the peer mentor were used to describe both academic and social areas of the students’ experiences within their living-learning community and how they interacted with their peer mentor. Participants described how Catherine cared about them by providing examples of actions and words she used both inside and outside the classroom. Catherine’s attitude of caring created trust with the residents which in turn
made the residents’ feel comfortable. Catherine also was able to encourage and be a resource within the realm of academics by helping students with scheduling classes, homework assignments, and connections to faculty in the residence hall. Students also felt comfortable and at ease because Catherine was a peer and experienced in the college environment. Catherine being a role model and hard worker inspired the students to be the best they could be both academically and socially. Students were encouraged when Catherine would notice their accomplishments in different contexts within the university community. Catherine’s caring demeanor and being a resource for the residents provided an example that the residents then used to help one another if Catherine was not available. These characteristics were woven into, and helped to create, the environment of the living-learning community.

**Environment of the Living-Learning Community**

The environments of the living-learning community were created by physical location, resident’s expectations and transitions, and the characteristics of the peer mentor. These aspects contributed to the students’ academic success and their connections with one another outside of the classroom. Students described living in the residence hall close to Catherine and their friends as critical to their interactions with one another and the university community. This environment of near proximity allowed community to develop more quickly and deeply than it would have without this closeness of physical location.

Residents came into the living-learning community experience with expectations, some of which were reinforced by their parents. These expectations guided how the
students viewed the peer mentor as well as the transitional moments within the semester. The beginning of the year and being away from home was a transition from high school to college. Residents also faced academic transitions involving changing their major. These transitions were part of the environment of the living-learning community.

Some characteristics of the peer mentor along with physical aspects of the environment served to create an environment of availability of the peer mentor. This availability was described in context of both characteristics as well as location, with an example being Catherine regularly sitting by the front door of the building. Students knew, even though some of them might not have approached her, that Catherine was available to them for academic or social concerns or questions.

Another environment the students talked about was one of relationships with one another, the peer mentor, involvement in community activities, and academics. Some students also stated that they kept to themselves because they did not need the interactions of others. Relationships with other people or individuality were interrelated to the connections students made inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

Finally, academic milieu was a subcategory that emerged from the student’s stories. The students stated that Catherine was an encourager, resource, and role model for them and these attributes created an environment of academic support and challenge. Students spoke of these characteristics of Catherine as reasons they were able to not only survive but succeed in their first year of college. Students across the board stated Catherine was a significant help to the residents within her major, nursing. Some students reported that Catherine had no impact on their academic performance but their
expectations and having personal drive to overcome transitions led to them to succeed academically. All students had to take the HEHD 199 class in their first semester living in the community. This frustrating class environment forced students to reflect upon what they wanted to take away from their college experience. This class encouraged students to think about future decisions. Some went on to participate in the class in the second semester when it was not required. The environments created can only be understood in relation to the characteristics of the peer mentor. Both the characteristics of the peer mentor and the environments explained by the students were related to how the students processed and made decisions.

Residents’ Decision Making

The decision making category has to be understood through the interrelated connections of characteristics and environments. Students had to balance their day to day decisions by processing their parental expectations, individual beliefs for the present and future, and the encouragement of the peer mentor to make good decisions. Most students were already thinking about future prosperity by making decisions to change majors, study abroad, or intentionally engage in certain extracurricular activities. Decision making seemed to be a hard process for the students as they were balancing ideas from parents, friends, and Catherine as well as starting to define for themselves where they wanted to be in the future.

The story of the residents is one of interaction between the peer mentor and the community environment created. The residents had to balance their past experiences and expectations with their actual experience. Decisions were made by students to help
themselves through transitions and difficult situations by using the peer mentor as a resource to think about their future. Catherine was given respect by most of the students based on her characteristics and the environment that was created. The decision making of what actions to take on a daily basis ultimately came down to each individual resident. However, the role of the peer mentor and the community environment cannot be taken left out of the picture.

Part 2

Implications of how the peer mentor affected the residents academically and socially

The following piece discusses the implication of the grounded theory which explains how the peer mentor affected the residents both academically and socially. This section responds to the two sub-research questions asked in this study which were (1) how does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members academically? and (2) how does the peer mentor affect the living-learning community members socially? This part is intended explain the projecting nature of the grounded theory specific to the research site in context of academic and social arenas.

Academically

The grounded theory from this study explains how residents process and make decisions based on the characteristics of the peer mentor and environment of the living-learning community. One difficulty in the academic realm was an issue of scheduling; students not understand the process or even what classes to take. The peer mentor provided an informal avenue for the students to get advice by asking questions and observing how the peer mentor interacted with the environment as well. Peer mentors who are knowledgeable about basic processes of the university either through training or
from their own experiences may serve as a natural resource on questions of academic issue.

The peer mentor was a nursing major. Students of different majors came to Catherine for help. But all students, nursing and non-nursing acknowledge Catherine was more of a benefit for the students in her specific major. The students who were non-nursing majors looked on the nursing students in the living-learning community with a degree of jealousy because Catherine was able to relate and help those students with greater insight. Catherine understood the classes that needed to be taken and the extracurricular groups to either be involved in or not be involved with. Catherine was so knowledgeable she was able to help the students learn how to fit a study abroad semester into a full nursing academic load. This aspect of academic support implies that residents may be best served by a peer mentor of the same major.

Catherine provided an informal avenue for helping the students interact with the faculty and staff of the college. At the beginning of the year, Catherine worked closely with the college to have faculty at move-in day. Catherine was touted as connecting students with the faculty on that first day. Residents felt more at ease during the advising luncheons held in the residence hall because Catherine helped calm residents and relieve nerves so that students could have productive conversations with the advisors about any questions they had during the previous month. These meeting and interactions gave the students confidence to interact with the faculty and staff by themselves towards the end of the second semester. Catherine also interacted with the residents in the required HEHD 199 class held in the fall semester. The students relied on Catherine as the go
between for students and college. Catherine modeled in this class how to appropriately communicate with the professor. The students let Catherine do all the communicating for this class. However, students used this model that Catherine provided them to communicate with other faculty members throughout their other classes. These were clear examples of how the peer mentor brought students and faculty together to enhance the learning process. From this it is evident that the peer mentor is not solely responsible for academic mentoring, but can create meaningful connections for academic enhancements and deeper faculty/student relationships. Further research is still needed to understand the scope of the peer mentor’s role in academic support.

Finally, there were residents who did not seek Catherine out for academic help. These students attributed their parents or their internal drive to succeed as reasons for not interacting with Catherine for academic help. From this it is evident that not all students will benefit from a peer mentor, but overwhelmingly students were positively impacted academically by the peer mentor relationship.

Socially

Residents of the living-learning community interacted with the peer mentor through social interactions just as they did for academic interactions. Catherine provided avenues for students to connect with those residents living close to one another. On move-in day, Catherine was seen connecting students with similarities together. This continued during the school year through activities and informal visits to a student’s room. Catherine was able to help the students adjust from the transition from high school to college, from living at home to living away from home, and to learning how to live
independently. Catherine was involved with programming for the community. Catherine’s involvement and dedication to these events provided opportunities for students to not only interact with Catherine but also interact with one another in the community. These social interactions connected the students to one another which lead to academic connections as well. Even the social aspect cannot be seen as separate from the academics. Peer mentors who are willing to learn about the residents they mentor can serve as a resource connecting students of similar interests and ideas to create a closer community and greater interdependence among residents.

Some residents found they enjoyed being their own individual and not worrying about the community. Several residents spoke of not having time for the community because what they were interested in outside of the classroom was something different than what the community was offering during the not class times. These stories were rare but noted because it is important to see how the community functioned as a whole.

The professional golf management major men had a connection that went well beyond the classroom. The non-golf management students noticed how this group had a connection that the other community members could not infiltrate. The golf management members came into the experience with the understanding they were not just going to take classes together but they were going to bond outside the classroom. One individual stated this was the reason he decided to come to the research site university.

Students stated it was nice having someone with same outlook in life living with them that they could interact with outside of class. These connections and relationships were ones that allowed the students to thrive both socially and academically. Through
the example of Catherine the students knew what was expected of them and began to help each other when Catherine was not around. The peer mentor characteristics’ along with the environment helped the students make decisions to benefit them academically and socially.

Again I want to thank you for your help in this process and any feedback would be appreciated.

Grace and peace,
Wylie
Appendix H

Peer Advisor Job Description

**HEHD Living Learning Community**
Peer advisors will serve as academic navigators ensuring academic growth and success during the first year on campus. Further, they will exemplify the qualities and characteristics as outlined in the six HEHD learner dispositions and assist HEHD freshmen in their development into “human development specialists.” Specifically, the peer advisors will:

- Live in Mauldin Hall in a single room provided to the student by University Housing at the double rate charge;
- Hold 8 office hours per week on the hall;
- Working with the resident assistants and HEHD faculty and staff, identify co-curricular activities and personal interactions for students in the HEHD LLC to incorporate ideas such as increased faculty/student interactions, activities with other communities, activities linked to the HEHD LLC service learning project, or activities that support understanding of the HEHD learner disposition;
- Assist with mid-semester feedback (fall semester only) for students enrolled in the LLC;
- Assist in the planning of and attendance at all HEHD academic events required for students in the HEHD LLC including identified service learning project for the LLC;
- Participate and attend hall council meetings as scheduled;
- Attend weekly meetings with the resident assistant staff and designated College of HEHD staff and faculty;
- Schedule additional events, examples may include: study groups, lunch outings, cultural events, Clemson experiences like intramural teams or extra-curricular outings (sporting events);
- Assist in the development of resources for residents;
- Assist in the evaluation of the program.

**Job Requirements:**
1. Knowledge of university regulations as stated in the Clemson University Undergraduate Announcements.
2. Ability to answer questions concerning HEHD programs, HEHD learner dispositions, or serve as a referral to an academic advisor (HEHD AAC) or faculty member for more information.
3. Ability to communicate effectively with residents and supervisor.
4. Attend training meetings as assigned by housing and advising center staff.
5. Attend training and preparation for residence hall opening held before the start of classes in August.
Minimum qualifications:
1. Completion of freshman year in HEHD major.
2. Interest in working with HEHD students and helping them develop academically, socially, and professionally.
3. Ability to relate with students both individually and in groups.
4. Commitment to upholding and supporting policies and programs of University Housing, Residential Life and Clemson University.
5. Maintain cumulative 3.0 GPR or higher.
REFERENCES


