

Creating Community

USING A PEER MENTOR PROGRAM TO ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

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INTRODUCTION:

In Fall 2011 the University of Tennessee TLA student chapter introduced a peer mentor program intended to foster meaningful academic and social relationships among its new and continuing members. Our pilot program, conducted throughout the 2011-2012 school year, has shown that students who participated in the program were more satisfied with their student experience, and had higher levels of overall satisfaction with the University of Tennessee Master of Information Sciences program.

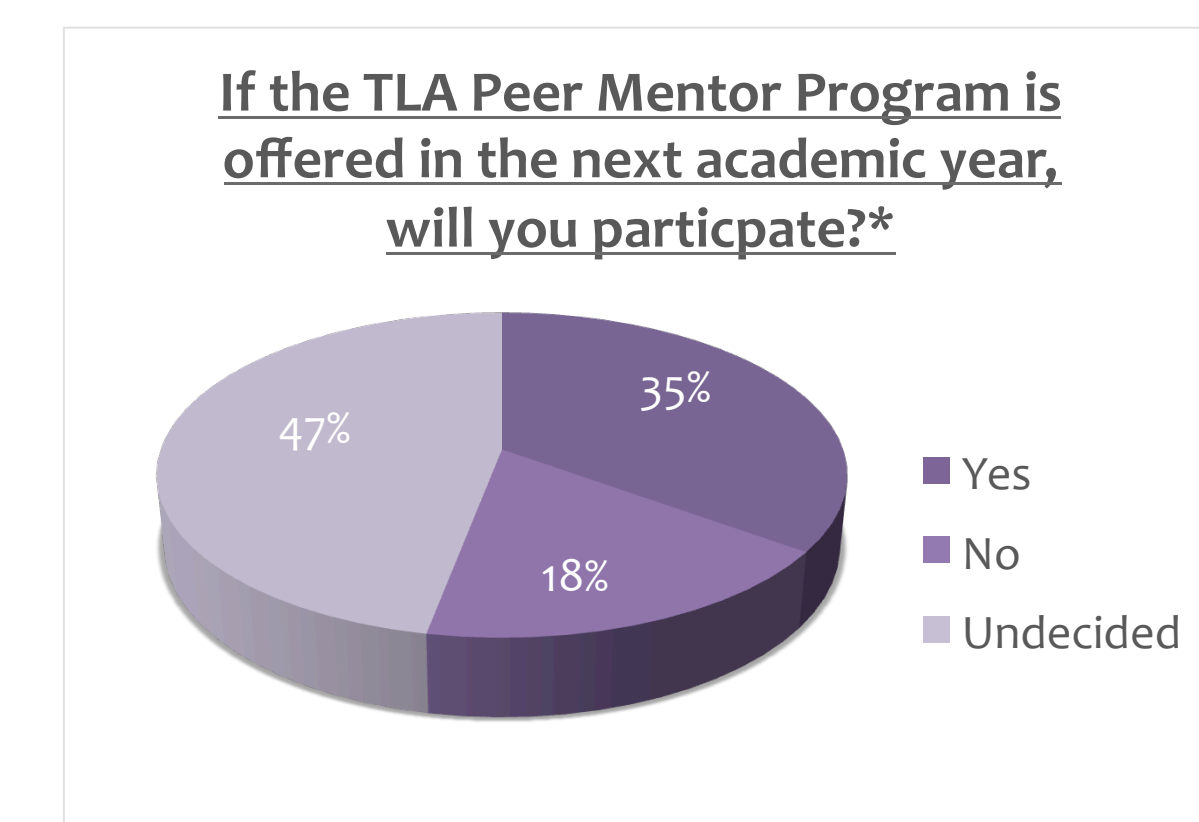
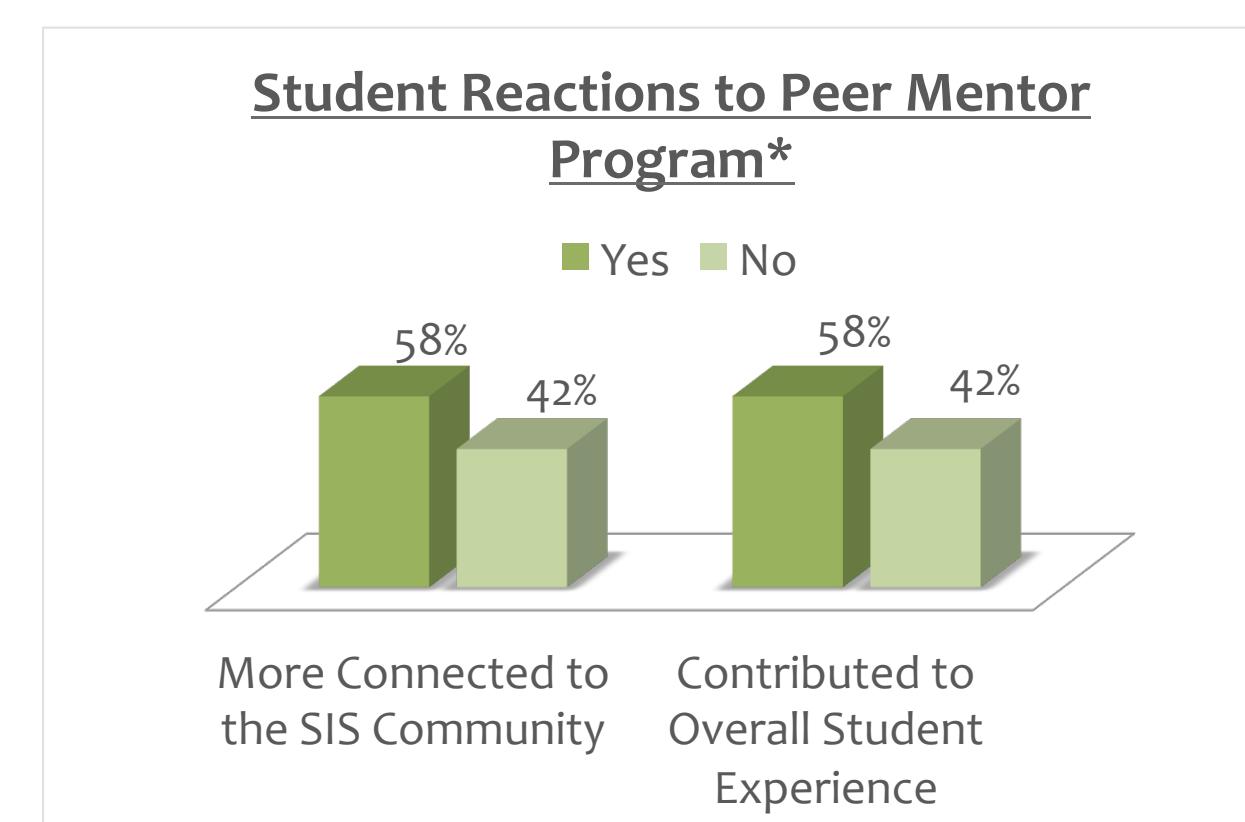
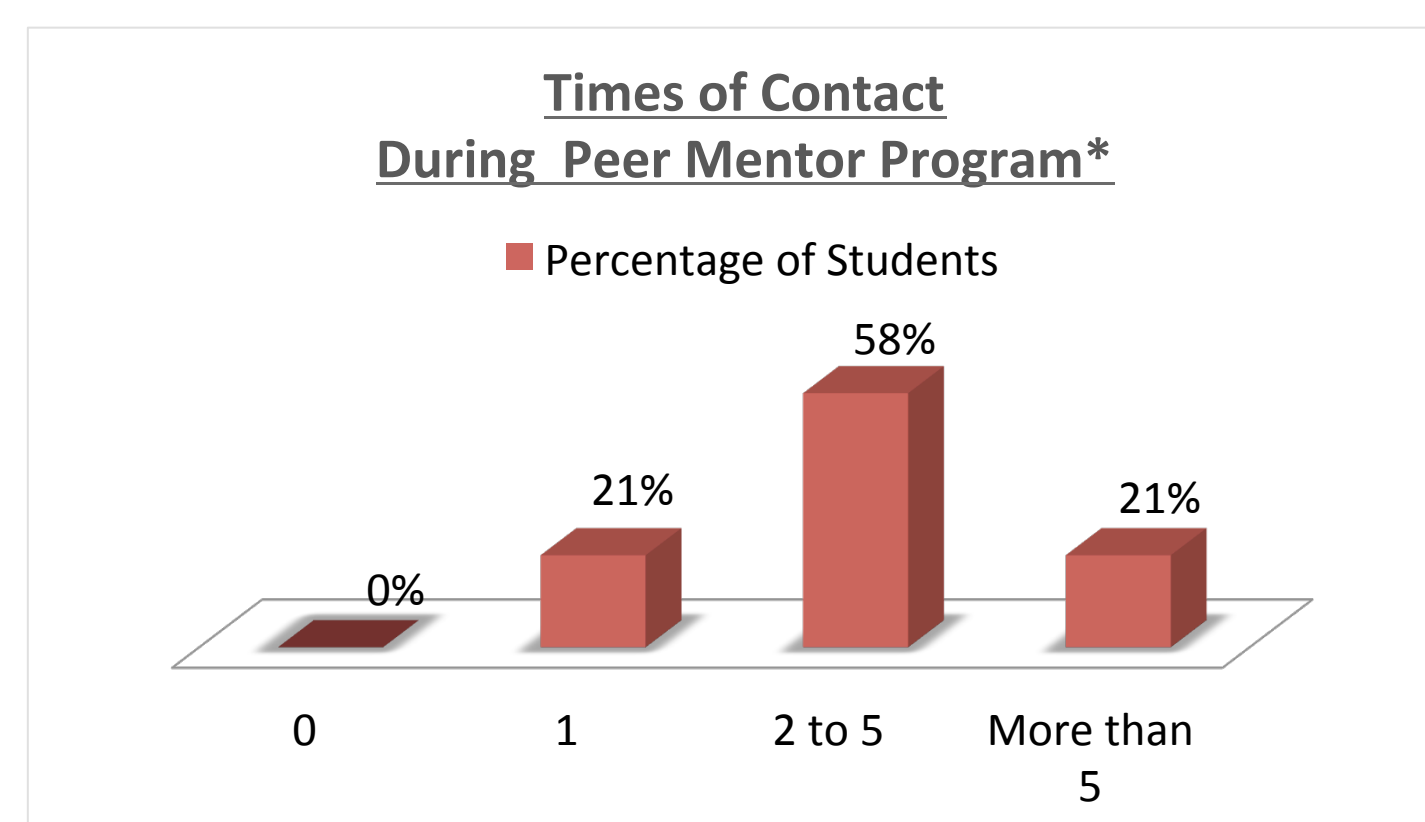
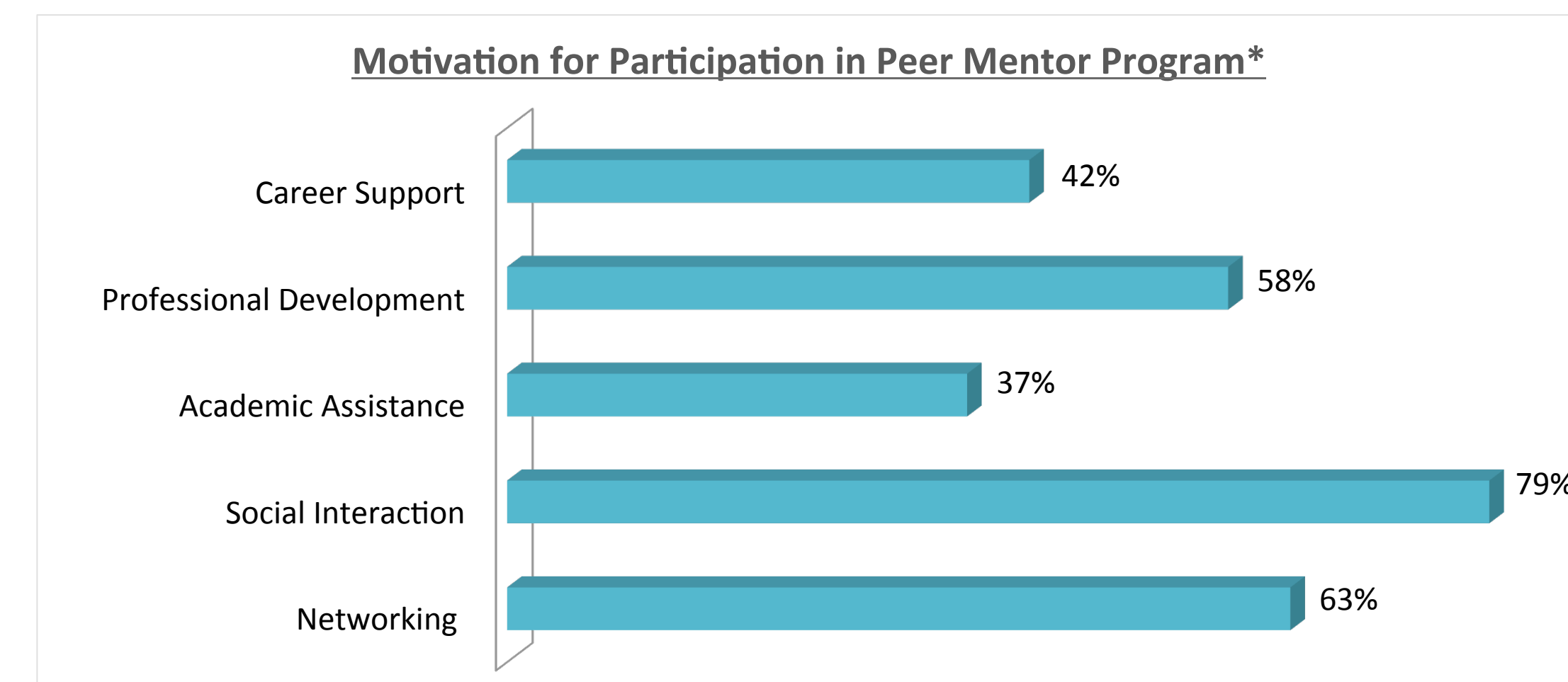
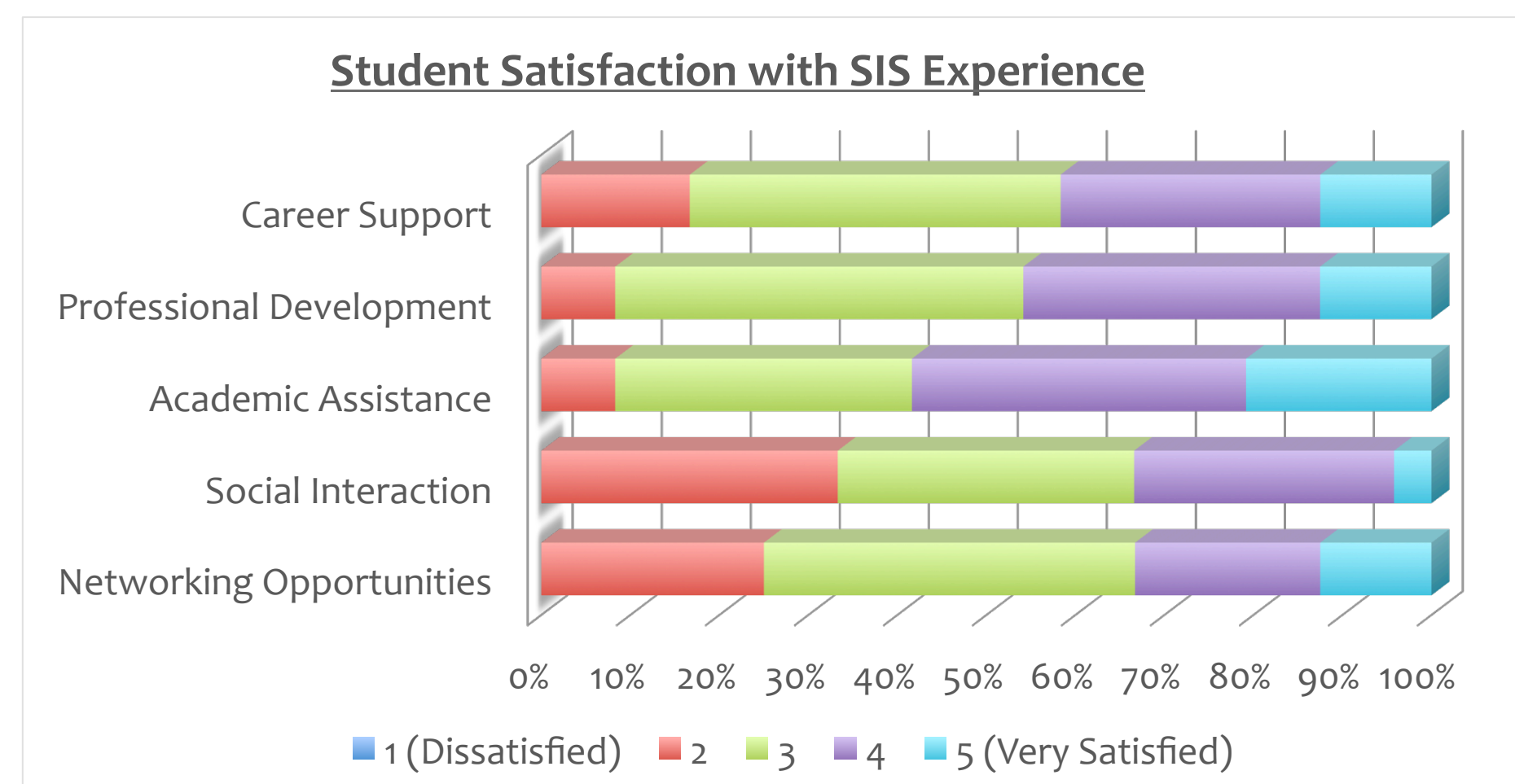
PROBLEM:

- The TLA Student chapter includes both on-campus and distance education students. Organizing programs and events to meet the needs of all of our student members has been a continual challenge.
- The MSIS course structure requires that incoming students take a series of "core courses" before continuing on to electives. As a result, incoming students have few opportunities to interact with continuing students until they begin their electives in their second semesters.

PROCESS:

During the developmental stages of our pilot peer mentor program, potential participants were asked to complete a brief informational survey. The 33 responses were used to match pairs of students.

ASSESSMENT: Results from our student satisfaction survey conducted in spring 2012 are included below. Of the 24 responses received, 19 participated in the Peer Mentor Program.



* Results exclude those of non-participants.

ANALYSIS:

- As demonstrated in responses, students are moderately satisfied with the academic and career support currently provided by SIS. Students reported higher levels of dissatisfaction with the social interaction available to them in SIS. The peer mentor program will continue to address this sentiment.
- Over half of the students surveyed used the program as a supplement for social interaction, networking opportunities, and professional development.
- All respondents who participated in the survey had contact with their peer mentor/mentee at least once.
 - To support the overall experience of student participants, the investigators suggest that subsequent programs include training for mentors to strengthen mutual communication.
- Nearly half respondents indicated uncertainty in participating in a similar program again.
 - The investigators believe this was influenced by results indicating that 79% of participants were contacted five times or less during the mentor program.
- A majority of students reported that the Peer Mentor program made them feel more connected with the SIS community and had a positive impact on their overall experience.

***2. I am a(n):**

First year on-campus student

First year distance student

Continuing on-campus student

Continuing distance student

***8. If I had to choose, I would prefer a student mentor that: (please rate in order of importance)**

	Least			Most
Shares my academic or professional interests	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is in a similar place in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is in my physical location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is the same gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

***4. Please pick the statement that best describes you:**

An educated twenty-something. I graduated with my BA within the last five years and am now pursuing my first masters degree.

An equally educated late-twenty-to-early-thirties-something. I graduated with my BA within the last ten years, got a little life experience, and have returned to school to pursue my first masters.

A professional student. I already have (at least!) one masters degree in a subject and am now working on my second, or third graduate degree.

A free spirit. I have taken the time to decide who I am and what I want to do. I might have tried a few different careers before making the decision to return to school for my MSIS.

A practicing librarian. I already have a career in a library - all I am missing is the degree.

A hybrid. I am a part parent, part student, part professional. Although I juggle family, work, and school I always manage to look fabulous.

I am an enigma!

***5. I am most interested in a career as a(n):**

Academic Librarian

Public Librarian

School Media Specialist

Special Librarian

Medical Librarian

Law Librarian

Archivist

Knowledge Manager

Undecided - I am open to possibilities!

***7. Please pick the statement that best describes the relationship you hope to have with your mentor/mentee**

A friendly classmate; someone I can feel comfortable emailing to ask/answer a quick question about SIS, or perhaps have a short phone conversation with. At this time, I am not interested in meeting my student partner in person.

A friendly student adviser/ee; (for first years)- someone who has the patience and willingness to answer my questions and give honest advice. (for second years)- someone who might want or need a little extra guidance in these first semesters. If my partner asked, I would be willing to meet in person - but I wouldn't mind if we kept our relationship to email correspondence or phone conversations.

A friendly colleague; someone I can come to with research questions or comments. Having a friend is great, but I am more interested in developing an intellectual relationship. However we decide to communicate, I am most interested in sharing ideas.

A friend; someone I can email or call to ask questions about SIS - or maybe just to talk. If my partner is nearby, I would be interesting in meeting over coffee.

Used to match students at a similar place in life

Used to match students with similar scheduling preferences