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.

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.