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Beyond ARL Diversity Initiatives: Peer Mentoring

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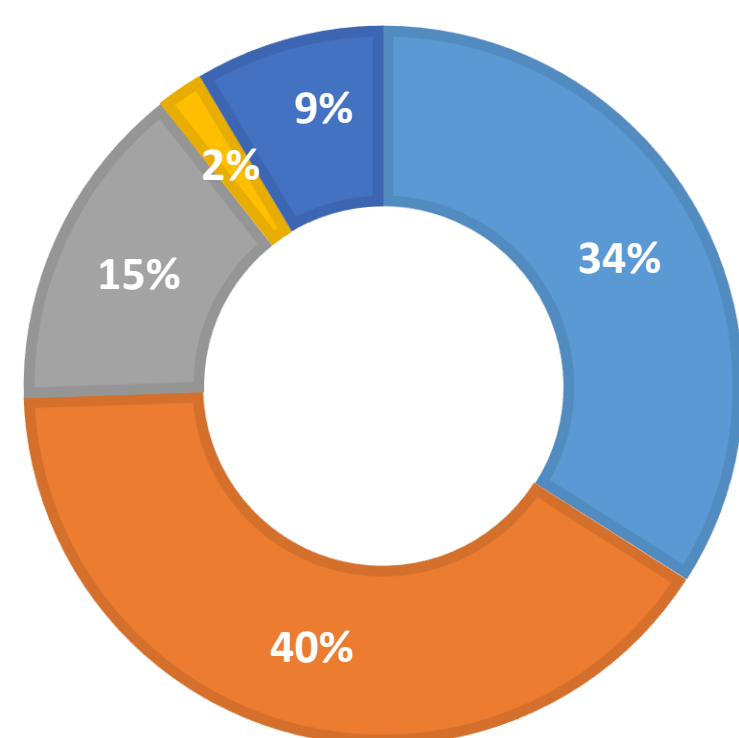
Background: The purpose of this research project is to highlight the benefits of peer mentoring as an ongoing resource for career advancement and retention among alumni of the Association of Research Libraries' Career Enhancement Program (CEP) and Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce (IRDW) program. We define peer mentoring as informal mentoring that happens between individuals to promote career success. This project is in response to "White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS" in which one of Hathcock's criticisms of current diversity initiatives is the focus on increasing numbers without addressing long-term retention.

Methodology: The project was conducted through two methods. It included an online survey with questions related to demographics, work status, and relationships with CEP/IRDW peers, and structured interviews with questions related to CEP/IRDW experiences and peer mentoring relationships. There were 33 survey responses and 14 interview participants. The phenomenology method was used to identify peer mentoring themes in interview responses. This project was approved by the University of Nebraska Medical Center Institutional Review Board.

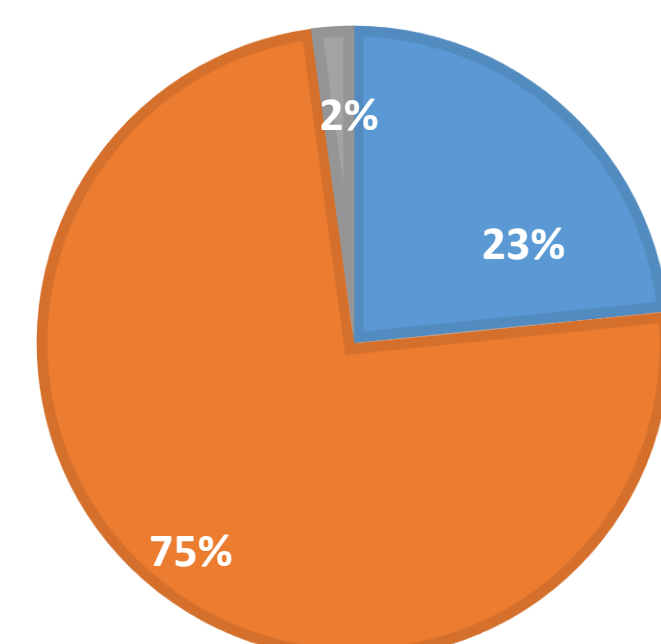
Survey & Interview Demographics

- 21 CEP alumni
- 21 IRDW alumni
- 5 alumni participated in both programs

■ Asian/Pacific Islander ■ Black or African American
 ■ Hispanic or Latino ■ Native American
 ■ Multi-ethnic

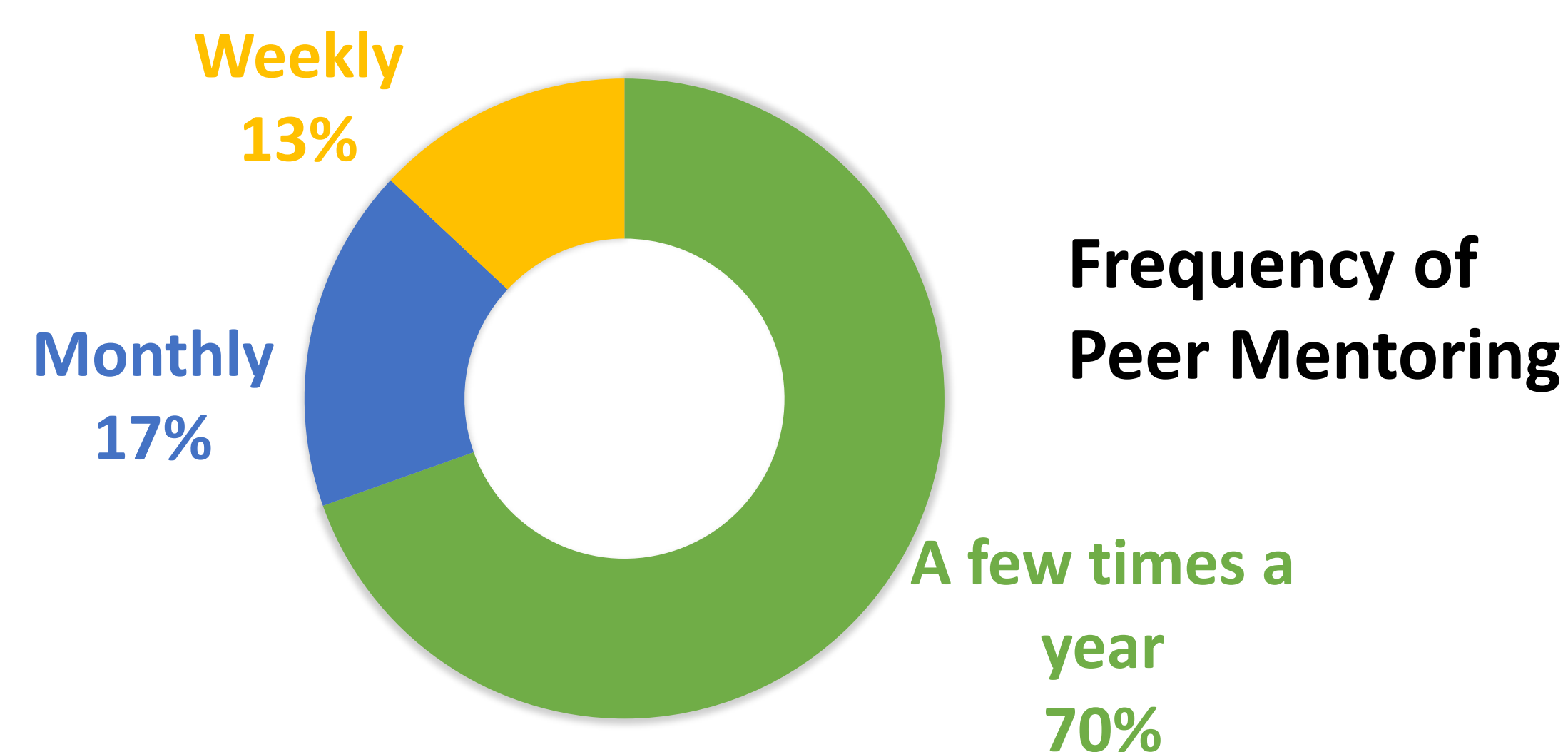


■ Male ■ Female ■ Prefer not to disclose

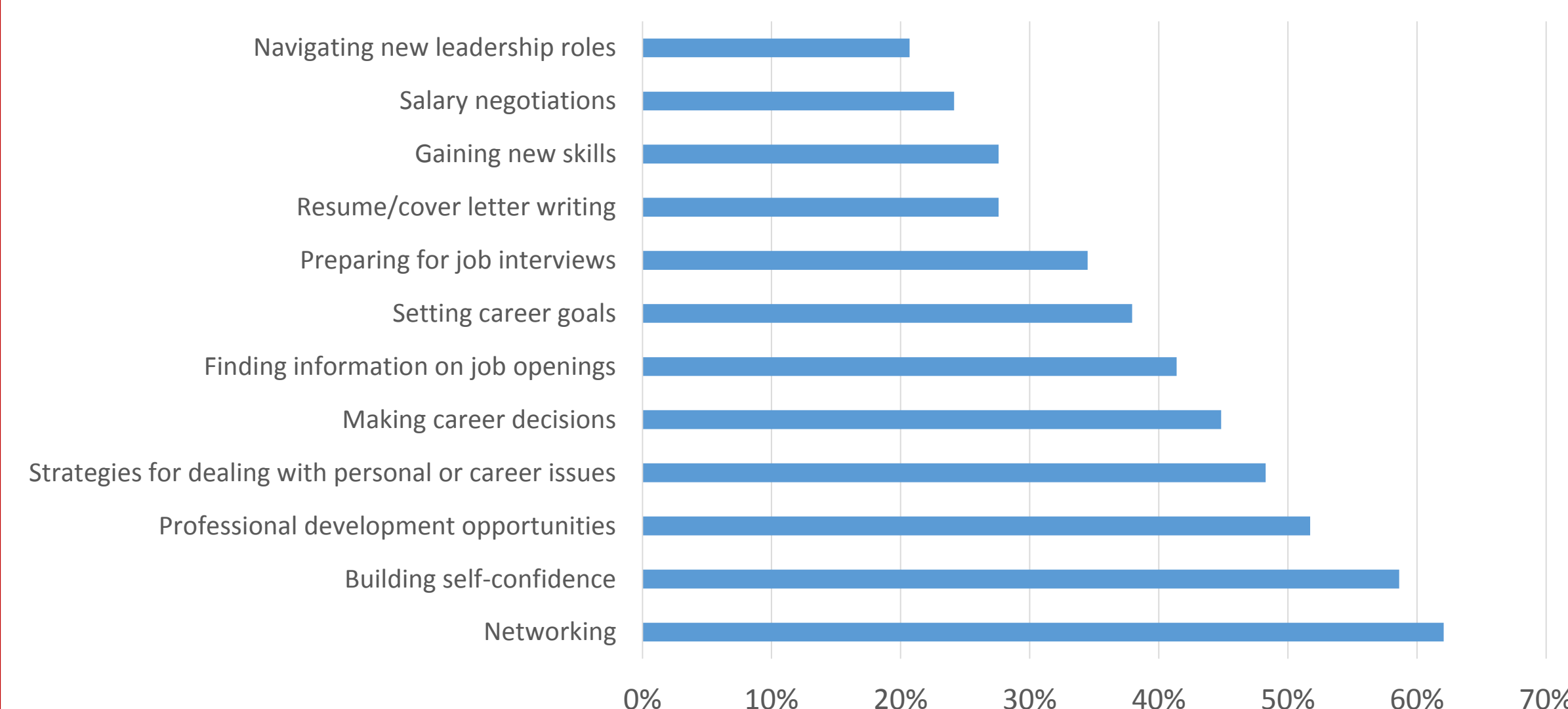


SURVEY

58% of survey participants received peer mentoring from other CEP/IRDW scholars.



Some of the ways peer mentoring was helpful:



76% believe it is important for ARL diversity scholars to provide support & resources for each other after completing the program.

INTERVIEW THEMES

COMMUNITY

"Quite a few of them are doing amazing things. ... If they can do it, then I can do it. It definitely inspires me. We celebrate each other and celebrate our accomplishments ... With librarianship being so cut throat sometimes, it's nice to know you have somebody in your corner."
– IRDW Participant

"The CEP program gave me a community that I didn't necessarily have. ... It made me more eager to participate professionally in a lot of ways."
– CEP Participant

RESILIENCE

"I also think that creating these networks for librarians of color also help with retention. I think when people feel isolated or don't have someone to vent to or discuss specific issues with its very difficult."
– CEP Participant

"The network of peers helps me deal with the microaggression at work. The social isolation for being the only POC on staff. My peers kept me encouraged and we developed a stronger community of librarians."
– IRDW Participant

PAYING IT FORWARD

"I had just graduated, so I was like, I don't know if I can be a mentor. My mentors ... had been professionals for years. And I was like no, you can. And so I think that's also a good encouragement to turn around and help people from diverse backgrounds as much as possible to help them rise as well."
– CEP Participant

"IRDW helps place us whether immediately, or with some people it's been a little later down the road. And that helps us to bring other people with us and really help guide others."
– IRDW Participant

SUPPORT SYSTEM

"We stay in touch for sure, not only through the Facebook page, but just in general through other communications, and conferences. We're really supportive of one another."
– CEP Participant

The cohort is a place to go to vent and help uplift/encourage each other."
– IRDW Participant

Conclusions: The CEP and IRDW programs use a cohort model that fosters trust and relationship building, and contributes to increased opportunity for peer mentoring. For many alumni this peer mentoring continues long after their program ends and supports their advancement in and commitment to librarianship. This also influences some alumni to mentor others from diverse backgrounds outside the ARL programs (both formally and informally).

Limitations: The research limitations include a small sample size, and a focus on alumni who participated in CEP and IRDW between 2009 – 2014.

Reference:

Hathcock, A. (2015). White Librarianship in Blackface: Diversity Initiatives in LIS. *In The Library With The Lead Pipe*. Retrieved from <http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2015/lis-diversity/>

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