

## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Tutoring and Mentoring

Nelia Frade\*

South African institutions of higher education (HE) have increasingly come under pressure to broaden access to historically under-represented groups who are often underprepared for tertiary education as a result of apartheid-era secondary schooling (White Paper, 2013). This has resulted in student enrolments becoming increasingly diverse with respect to racial, cultural, socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds (Underhill & McDonald, 2010). In an attempt to address these issues and promote increased throughput rates, institutions of HE have increasingly begun to introduce tutoring, including supplemental instruction (SI) and peer-assisted learning (PAL) and mentoring programmes. In so doing, they have begun to recognise that tutoring and mentoring are not just nice to have but can provide significant opportunities for engaged teaching and learning, and access to the epistemological discourse of the academy.

However, the value of tutoring and mentoring programmes lies in how effectively they are planned and implemented. Well-developed programmes provide the ideal opportunity for students to actively engage with study content, build relationships within a supportive peer-led environment, and become socially inducted into the institution (Kuh & Pike, 2005). Stakeholders involved with these programmes should have a general understanding of the goals, establishment and maintenance of these programmes in order to maximise their effectiveness (Clarence, 2016). In light of this, tutoring and mentoring programmes require ongoing collaboration between academic staff, tutors/mentors and staff development professionals, in order to create and sustain effective teaching and learning environments for students (Clarence, 2016). Furthermore, students who serve in these positions must receive the necessary training and support to fulfil these roles effectively. Training is critical for developing the capabilities and skills required for peer-led activities (Keup, 2012). Intentional and ongoing training is a prerequisite for any successful tutorial and mentoring programme (Latino & Ashcraft, 2012). Lastly, opportunities should be created for stakeholders to evaluate, reflect and improve practice on an ongoing basis to ensure that these programmes remain effective and responsive to student needs (Underhill, Clarence-Fincham & Petersen, 2014).

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This special issue of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa (JSAA)* has encouraged contributors to rethink and re-imagine the pedagogies that underpin tutoring and mentoring practices within the South African HE landscape. The issue offers an exciting diversity of approaches to tutoring and mentoring. Some articles focus on the role of tutoring (including SI and PAL) to promote student engagement, multilingualism, collaborative and cooperative learning, to enhance student learning and to promote quality assessment. Other articles offer a systematic review of student support programmes to highlight effective support practices and guidelines for implementing programmes that promote social integration. Then, at the other end of the continuum, there are articles focusing on online mentoring to promote critical and reflexive thinking and the perceived impact of mentoring programmes on student performance. Lastly, this *JSAA* issue ends with an article that provides an initial national snapshot of the development and experiences of peer leaders at six South African institutions of higher education. The wide variety of topics should offer something of interest to all who have been involved in tutoring and mentoring programmes, and allow organisers and facilitators to share ideas.

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This *JSAA* issue, which was driven and guest edited by Nelia Frade, assisted by Najwa Norodien-Fataar, is intended as a vehicle to focus attention on tutoring and mentoring in South African higher education institutions. As part of the TDG grant project, it provides a forum for publishing some of the resulting research as well as that of participants involved in tutoring and mentoring from the wider academic community. Some of the research in this issue benefited from association with and debate at the joint conference of the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) and HELTASA in November 2016. It is hoped that the contributions to this issue serve to strengthen debate and exploration of this important component of the higher education landscape.

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