Abstract

International Students coming to Australia, and often traveling overseas for the first time, can feel bewildered and a little lost initially. With this in mind, Swinburne’s campus at Lilydale has been going the extra mile to look after these students, with a successful mentoring program now in its third year. The program was implemented in response to the perceived need to help exchange students acclimatize quickly to their new environment from both an academic and a cultural perspective. To date the program has been very positive and successful and has enabled international students the opportunity to meet, make friends and be a part of the local culture, whilst local students are learning about other cultures and ways of life in a personalised way.

The program was so successful that in 2001 it was expanded to include all international students as well as the exchange students. The program works by inviting domestic Swinburne, Lilydale students to volunteer as mentors. Applicants are interviewed and those who are successful are provided with a position description, training, planning sessions and an information pack. Each international and exchange student is assigned a mentor who is responsible for introducing them to campus life and for helping them find their way in a broader sense by providing advice on issues such as shopping, banking and entertainment. A Mentor Coordinator, who is a staff member, is responsible for the program. This staff member works closely with the mentors and the international students. An activities program is developed and in order to ensure quality processes and adequacy of provision, the program is evaluated and reviewed each semester from both the student and the mentor perspective.

Introduction

International students coming to Australia, and often travelling overseas for the first time, can feel bewildered and a little lost initially. With this in mind, Swinburne’s Campus at Lilydale has been going the extra mile to look after these students, with a successful mentoring program now in its third year.

Swinburne, Lilydale is a regional campus of a University which has its beginnings at a metropolitan campus in Melbourne, Australia. The Lilydale campus was established in late 1996 and in 1997 attracted one international student. This number has grown considerably since that time to over 100 students and is expected to grow even further in the coming years.

Being a small regional campus, which now has approximately 2,500 Higher Education students and 1,500 TAFE students, attracting international students was an issue. Also due to declining government funding and the push to increase self generated revenue, it became a focus of the Higher Education Division, Swinburne, Lilydale.

By 1999, the number of international students had grown and Swinburne, Lilydale expanded its international focus by setting up its first exchange agreements. The first exchange student cohort arrived in Semester Two 1999 with three students - two
from Sweden and one from the USA. Some of the comments from the first cohort of students were very telling:

‘No-one talks to me’.

‘They stare at me as if I am from another planet.’

‘I didn’t know where to go or what to do, or even how to do it, and no-one was there to help.’

Their experience was quite different to that of the students Swinburne, Lilydale has today.

It was at this point that it was decided some sort of support program was needed, otherwise student ‘word of mouth’ upon return to their home countries would not be very positive and may have a negative impact on projected growth. From this, the Mentor Scheme was born in order to provide better support services for international exchange students and to help them with their transition to a new country and a new university. Also, whilst it was recognized that full degree international students may well have the same issues with transition, it was decided to pilot the program solely with exchange students.

**Development and Implementation**

In order to know what the program needed to provide, staff drew on their own experiences of traveling, how they felt and what they had needed at the time. What other universities were doing for their students in the way of a support program was also investigated, at both a national and international level. The Australian universities researched included UNSW; Charles Sturt; Deakin and University of Queensland. The international Universities included: Jonkoping, Sweden, Trollhatten-Uddevalla, Sweden; Drury, USA; Aalborg, Denmark and a number of others in the USA.

From the findings, it was determined that international exchange students need a range of information upon arrival, from the quite complex to the very simple. For instance, many incoming students are entering a different culture or may need practical advice on where the supermarket is, how to find a doctor, catching public transport and so on. They also need to be able to integrate with the local students and form social support networks. One important aspect agreed upon, was that students also needed to have fun as a part of the program and therefore an enhanced ‘Melbourne’ experience. Part of these needs were met by publishing a comprehensive International Student Guide. However, more needed to be done.

The next phase was to plan how to implement a Mentor Program. The first step was to produce an application form and send this to all second and third year students at the end of the year with their results.

From the mailout, there was one applicant, therefore some willing local students who had already been informally acting as support for international students were actively recruited. Some later year students were also approached who it was agreed would benefit the program. From this we managed to obtain three students to be mentors. This was a good number given that the exchange program was only just starting and there were only six incoming students. The three mentors were allocated two students each and the types of support required which we had previously identified,
were discussed with the mentors. At this point the program was fairly raw and somewhat informal. Mentors were left to identify activities with their allocated students and regularly liaised with International office staff on how the program was going and what issues were arising.

The program was a success and provided incoming students with a much better experience. However, the process needed to be far more formalized and less casual in approach. It also needed better co-ordination. Upon review, the following action was taken:

- Make the program more formal
- Appoint a Mentor Co-ordinator
- Establish an activities program
- Provide training for mentors
- Establish a formal feedback process

From these humble beginnings the program has grown as have the number of incoming students. In 2001, the Division determined that the program should be expanded to include full degree international students. This decision came with its own set of challenges. Also, as the program developed, it has become more streamlined as each issue and challenge encountered has been dealt with. Further, changes have also been made due to the excellent feedback provided by both the mentors and the exchange students.

The Mentor experience has also benefited the local students who are gaining an international experience at home and are learning about other cultures and ways of life. A bonus of the program is that it has raised awareness of international issues and exchange on the campus and the number of applications for outgoing exchange has doubled each year from 2000.

Key Features

1. Staffing
2. Aims and Objectives
3. Benefits to Mentors and Mentees
4. Training
5. Position Description
6. Activities
7. Reward and Recognition
8. Feedback and Evaluation
9. Promotion

1. Staffing

A common strand which appears in a number of programs in Australia and overseas, is the appointment of a staff member to be the co-ordinator. It seemed that in order for programs to work, the organization of programs needs to be within a staff position, which draws together all the necessary components and forms a single point of contact.

This has certainly been the case for Swinburne, Lilydale. A Mentor Co-ordinator was appointed as a part of another position and it is this role which has ensured continuity as well as an important point of contact for mentors and exchange students. The role
has also been very useful when dealing with difficult issues such as personality clashes, personal problems and consequent referrals to services as well as ensuring the smooth running of all aspects of the program. Some of the duties include:

- Co-ordination the Mentor Program
- Recruitment of Mentors
- Planning and running the Training sessions for Mentors
- Allocation of Mentees to mentors
- Ensuring regular Mentor Progress reports
- Administering the feedback questionnaires.
- Analysis of trends and formulation of recommendations for the next Semester.
- Planning and running the Official Activities program.
- Ensuring the Mentors plan their own activities
- Point of contact for Mentors and Mentees
- Dealing with issues as they arise

2. Aims and objectives

In 2001 it was determined that the aims and objectives of the program needed to be determined in order to provide focus on what was to be achieved. The aims were determined as follows:

- To assist exchange and international students in their transition to Australia and Swinburne, Lilydale.
- To make these students feel welcome and comfortable in their new environment.
- To act as a contact point and offer support.
- To ensure that these students have a pleasant experience in Australia.
- To ensure that these students present a positive image of Swinburne, Lilydale upon their return to their home country.

3. Benefits to Mentor and Mentees

The program has brought about a number of benefits to both the Mentors as well as the Mentees.

Mentor benefits

There were a number of benefits identified for mentors, not least of which are the transferable skills and attributes which can be valuable for student resumes. These include: leaderships skills, conflict resolution, team building and teamwork, dealing with cultural issues, management and organizational skills, networking, dealing with difficult people, communication and demonstrated initiative.

The following benefits have also been identified:

- Being a mentor also gives students a better understanding of their own educational experience and more of a sense of belonging to the Swinburne community (useful when trying to build later alumni relationships).
- It increases students’ social networks, sometimes internationally, thereby providing a grounding in cultural issues.
- It makes students feel useful within the Swinburne and wider community environment, and enables students to realise that they are making a valuable contribution. It can improve confidence and self esteem, and motivate them to
continue/improve in their own course at Swinburne, thereby leading to the possibility of increased retention rates.

- Mentors perspectives can be broadened, their own academic and personal learning experience can be enhanced and this can translate into learning back in the classroom.

**Mentee Benefits**
The benefits to mentees are numerous, not least of which is the provision of a support network. Other benefits identified include:

- Guidance, provision of local knowledge (particularly for International and Country students).
- Building of confidence.
- Integration into social activities and networks, and greater sense of belonging.
- A feeling of being involved and learning how to survive university.
- For international students in particular, an added benefit is aculturalisation to Swinburne and Australia.
- Mentees were deemed to also benefit from immediacy of information, and utilisation of more experienced students knowledge in relation to services available, and how to approach lecturers and the like.

It has also been determined that programs such as the Mentor programs can also encourage relationship building and the facilitation of lifelong networks (which may lead to later alumni relationships).

4. **Training**

In the early days of the program, the mentors were left to identify and construct their roles as peer mentors. However, upon review and feedback from the students at the end of the program’s first semester, the International Office decided that a formal training program needed to be developed. This in itself went through various stages of development.

It began as a briefing session, where the mentors were taken out to lunch and a series of speakers and professionals were invited along. The International Office discussed their expectations of the mentors; Swinburne counselling staff provided the culture shock briefing; academic staff talked about cultural variation; and past mentors shared their experiences.

It was at this stage that we also decided to develop packs to hand out to the mentors. Over time the packs have been through a number of reviews, which have resulted in additions as well as removal of items. Currently they include:

- Covering letter which includes an introduction, as well as the role of the International Office and the Mentor Coordinator.
- Contact details for all International Office staff and a list of the other mentors.
- Mentor Position Description (see 5 below)
- Use of Swinburne Facilities: Rules and Regulations
- A flyer on Student Services at Swinburne, Lilydale
- A leaflet on Culture Shock and what to do
- List of Semester Activities
- A list of all incoming international students
- Information on the countries that the students are coming from
- A brochure about the on campus accommodation
- Brochures on the region, including what to do in the area, a Melbourne Events Guide and a map of Melbourne.
- What to do in case of an emergency?

As the numbers of mentors and incoming international students continued to grow, we decided that a more detailed and more formalized briefing session was needed. This was also due to the fact, that as the International program developed, we learnt more about the needs and requirements of not only our incoming students, but also of the mentors. It was from this that the Briefing Session became a more detailed and in depth Training Program.

The program now includes a full day at Swinburne, Lilydale with the Mentor Coordinator, as well as either a weekend away or a night out for Activities brainstorming and planning. This is also a great opportunity for the mentors to get to know one another. The day program includes the following:

1. Introduction by the Mentor Coordinator
2. The mentors are then introduced to the other members of the International Office.
3. Distribution and explanation of the Mentor Packs.
4. Ice breakers
5. Expectations of the International Office and the Position Description
6. What to do in case of an Emergency
7. Culture Shock: What is it and how do I deal with it?
8. Making contact with your International Student for the first time
9. Steps in the Mentor Program: From Introductions to Farewells
10. Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness Issues
11. Experience of Being a Mentor (Talks given by previous mentors)
12. Experience of being an exchange student (Talks given by Swinburne, Lilydale students who have been on exchange)
13. Discussion Group: Issues and Challenges faced in the previous semester: how did we resolve them and what action will we take as a group in the future?
14. Student Allocations

After this day, the Mentor Coordinator and the mentors then go away to brainstorm and plan the activities for the rest of the semester. Many social activities also take place, so that the mentors can become comfortable with one another. In previous semesters, we were faced with the challenge of mentors not working together as a team. We found that some activities were not successful and that this was not actually due to the lack of student participation, but rather because the mentors did not know one another and therefore, how to work together on the organization and the subsequent execution of these activities.

The Mentor Training Program is now running efficiently with a number of staff involved in the day. The students are made aware right from the start what is expected of them; what steps they need to take throughout the semester; where they need to be active; and how to deal with a variety of situations. This early preparation and guidance allows them to be more effective mentors.

5. **Position Description**

In the first year of operation, it was found that whilst mentors were given verbal instructions on what was required of them, many were not carrying out their duties as
expected. It was determined that the students needed written guidelines outlining expectations of the role as well as modes of behaviour. Therefore, a position description was developed to provide guidance and to ensure that students understood the expectations of the Mentor Program.

The position description covers:
- Objectives
- Duties
- Mode of Behaviour

The duties include:
1. Contacting the allocated student/s before their arrival in Australia.
2. Upon arrival, assisting students in gaining information regarding day-to-day necessities, such as, public transport, shopping, food outlets, campus information, etc.
3. Ensuring continuous contact throughout the semester
4. Participating in mentor training and feedback sessions
5. Reporting to Swinburne, Lilydale International Office as required on the progress of students.
6. Being involved in the planning and the execution of activities, and attending official activities as required.
7. Assisting students in understanding and being comfortable with the Australian style of education.
8. Undertaking a support role with regards to culture shock, homesickness, etc. Referring students to Student Services if necessary.
9. Contacting Swinburne, Lilydale International Office if any problems or difficulties arise.
10. Behaving in a manner which shows respect and sensitivity to people of other cultures.

Students are given this Position Description at the Mentor Training Day. They are asked to read it and then sign off that they have understood the expectations and requirements of the program and that they will abide by these.

6. Activities

When the program first started, the importance of a structured activities schedule was not yet fully realised. The main concern at the time was the recruitment of students to the program. Some official activities were run by the Mentor Co-ordinator, but once appointed as Mentors, students were left to determine the other activities that they thought appropriate.

However, it did not take long to realize that a more co-ordinated activities program was needed. After two semesters of student feedback, an Activities program was developed. This included activities for exchange students which were run by staff, however, mentors were also invited.

Also, at this point work began on further developing the Orientation program to better meet the needs of incoming international students. What was needed was a program that was tailored for international students, but was also integrated with the local students. This way, the work was not being ‘doubled up’ and international and local students would be mixing from their first day on campus.
Included in the new Orientation program was a trip to Healesville Sanctuary, a National Wildlife Sanctuary. This introduced the students to native flora and fauna and also provided an opportunity for the international students to get to know each other as well as their mentors, some of which attended the day. This activity has been so successful that it continues to be an important part of the current Orientation Program.

Another new activity which has continued, was a ‘Meet the Staff’ Lunch. Mentors are invited to this as they act as a link between staff and students. This is very popular with staff, and helps staff to know who the international students are as well as giving the students the opportunity to meet the staff members they will be dealing with throughout their time at Swinburne.

A “Welcome to Australia” party was also set for the first week of classes. It is now a mentor organized activity, with staff guidance. Its aim is to act as the official welcome from the mentors to the students without hordes of staff being present. Usually the Mentor Co-ordinator and one other staff member attend this party.

Brainstorming and Planning sessions have been introduced for Mentors to undertake a more structured approach to activities they may want to organize for the semester. These activities are known as ‘Unofficial’ activities, as opposed to the ‘Official’ ones run by the Mentor Co-ordinator. International students are requested to attend some of the ‘Official’ activities, whereas they decide which of the Mentor run or ‘Unofficial’ activities they wish to attend. Some of the Mentor run activities include trips to the Grampians or Phillip Island, or just parties or outings to nightclubs, wineries, movies and the like. The Official activities run by the International Office include: Meet the staff Lunch, visit to Healesville Sanctuary, Yarra Valley Tour, Melbourne Tour, Welcome Party, Formal feedback sessions for mentors and exchange students and a Farewell function to name a few.

This combination has worked very well, however it has been found that as regards the Mentor run activities, the smooth running of these can be affected by how well the Mentors get to know each other at the beginning of the Semester. The Training and the brainstorming sessions have helped to ensure that they get to know each other better, which has in turn enhanced the operation of the Mentor run activities.

One challenge became apparent when the Mentor Program was introduced for full degree international students. It was found that they were of a very different culture to the exchange students who were mainly of European origin, and therefore did not enjoy the same types of activities. The effect was that the mingling of students did not occur as well as expected. In order to address this, a number of activities were introduced which were more acceptable for this group of students. This now includes Movie Nights and day trips to places of interest as well as to some sporting activities. The effect has been noticeable and there is now much more participation by all groups.

7. **Reward and recognition**

Whilst there are a number of intangible rewards, most programs originally considered had some sort of more tangible reward or recognition. This varied from a dinner, to a t-shirt, to a gift voucher for books. These could also assist in the recruitment of future mentors and of the programs investigated, most were exploring other forms of reward and recognition. A number of possibilities were identified, which include:
• Mentor program as a subject for credit (as per Swinburne, School of IT Transition Program)
• Award ceremony at graduation – possibly a community service award
• Publish names/photos
• Certificate (end first year) and/or Letter for CV
• Represent university at expos etc - ambassador
• Lapel pins, T-shirts, CD voucher
• Mentor of year with a gift
• Senior mentor position (possibly paid)
• Trips/activities at no cost

Currently Swinburne, Lilydale Mentors receive a T-shirt and a voucher for a CD. They are also paid for as a part of the Farewell dinner. Other less tangible rewards are those listed in section 3, Benefits to Mentors. The students have found the experience to be one which broadens their minds to the possibilities and they are meeting people from parts of the world they may never have thought of visiting, or even knew existed.

8. Feedback and evaluation process

In order to ensure the quality and relevance of the program we were providing for exchange and full degree international students, a more formal feedback process was introduced. This allowed for both the Mentors and the international students to have their say about what they wanted, what they felt was working and what they through was a waste of time. This has been an important part of the program for two years and has recently been streamlined to include a questionnaire, which allows for more quantifiable information. Previous sessions consisted firstly of email responses, then in the next review phase, was replaced with a discussion group for students where comments were noted. This still occurs, however, it is now done in conjunction with the questionnaire. Further to this written reports are given to the Mentor Co-ordinator on a regular basis throughout the semester, to ensure there are no problems occurring of which the Office is not aware.

From the Feedback questionnaire a Statistics report is generated as well as a summary of the findings. Recommendations for improvement are an outcome of the reports.

Evaluation

The mentor program was evaluated towards the end of each of the last two semesters, using a questionnaire, with the results being aggregated for the purpose of this paper. International exchange students were requested to evaluate their overall experience. The evaluation, which is to be extended to cover international full-fee students, contained questions relating specifically to the mentor program. The mentors were also requested to complete an evaluation form. It is evident from the evaluation that both the international exchange students and the mentors value the program. More detailed feedback for each group is given below.

International Exchange Student Feedback

Mentor contact with the international exchange students is most important. It is this contact that helps the student to assimilate into their new environment. The students
were asked how many times their mentor contacted them in the first month and during the semester. The results are summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of contacts</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; month</th>
<th>Semester</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>12 (60.0%)</td>
<td>6 (31.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>5 (25.0%)</td>
<td>8 (42.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+</td>
<td>3 (15.0%)</td>
<td>5 (26.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1. Level of Mentor Contact According to Mentees**

As expected, some students manage with a small number of contacts in the first month while others require considerably more in order to overcome the academic and cultural issues inevitably faced by a student studying in a foreign country.

Students also report that the frequency of contact decreases as time moves on. This is not surprising. Some students become independent quite quickly and prefer not to have regular contact. They still like to know that they have their mentor available in case they need them. Other students like the network that is created by the mentor scheme and maintain regular contact with their mentor throughout.

The mentors are encouraged to arrange activities that are in addition to those organised by the University. Such activities have included tours of the Melbourne city area, movie nights, shopping tours and a trip to see an Australian Rules Football match. Of course, there have also been many parties and barbeques. The international students have overwhelmingly endorsed these activities with 80% saying they enjoyed them.

75% of the students surveyed rated the mentor program as good to excellent. The remaining 25% rated it as average. The following quotes sum up the general international exchange student reaction to the mentor program:

“(It is) good and helpful in settling in.”

“I think the mentor program is very good. Because every new student needs guidance.”

“It is very useful the first few weeks when you have a lot of questions about everything. Just to know that you can call the mentor about everything makes you feel better.”

“Good to have someone to talk to and ask questions for the first time.”

“I really liked getting to know Australians like we did through the mentors…”

**Mentor Feedback**

A training session is organised for the mentors. 73.3% of the mentors found the session to be very useful or extremely useful. The remaining mentors were neutral. A number of different topics were addressed during the session and the following table indicates whether these were considered to be useful.
Table 2: Mentor response to usefulness of training topics

The training session also featured talks by previous mentors and Swinburne, Lilydale students who had returned from a student exchange placement. These talks are considered to be very useful because they provide a student perspective on the international experience.

The mentors are also provided with a Mentor Pack. They were asked to evaluate the usefulness of each of the items in the pack. Their responses are summarised in the table below. Clearly all items were favourably rated. It would appear that the usefulness of some items need to be emphasised more (particularly the information on Student Services which covers counselling; housing and employment; and health).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>Not Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Issues</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Information</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing on expectations and position description</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities for Cultural Awareness</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefing on semester activities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Information</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Mentor response to usefulness of items in Mentor Pack

The Swinburne Lilydale International Office provides support for the mentors. This is very well received with almost 90% of mentors rating the support as good to excellent. The office also provides the mentors with feedback reports and these are valued as demonstrated by the following quote:

“Because it helps you get an idea about where we stand and how it could be improved. Good for us too, to reflect on our experiences.”

The mentors were also asked to indicate how many times they contacted their mentees. The results, which are summarised in the table below, make for an interesting contrast with Table 1 which provided the mentee responses to the same question. The differences may be able to be explained by the fact that not all mentors and mentees responded to the evaluation and so we may not have all that many ‘matched pairs’. We need to undertake a more detailed analysis of this.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Contacts</th>
<th>1st month</th>
<th>Semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>11+</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Level of Mentor Contact According to Mentors

Almost all mentors felt that their mentee(s) were receptive to their contact. More often than not they formed friendships. A few mentors experienced some difficulties in contacting their mentees. The following quotes give some insight:

“The student was happy to have my support and I helped her to come out of her shell and feel more at home.”

“Fine. I think it took her a while to get used to me, but we get along well and she knows she can call me if any problems. But we don’t keep in touch too often as she’s pretty independent.”

“At first I felt pretty close to JS we would talk or message each other nearly every day but after about three or four weeks there was much less contact. I feel that I gave her a helpful start and she knew she could call me if she needed to or ask me anything. I made that quite clear, and she took it on (at the start anyway) – the students usually need you more at the start till they settle.”

“When I contacted them they seemed happy. Sometimes it was to (sic) hard to get a response.”

All of the mentors who were not completing their studies indicated that they would be prepared to participate in future mentor programs.

Issues and challenges encountered

1. Recruitment of mentors and Promotion

As mentioned previously, one of the issues encountered was the recruitment of not only suitable, but enough, mentors to the program. Of the national and international programs investigated almost all were voluntary, and all managed to recruit students despite this. Since the inception of the program at Swinburne, Lilydale, it has been found that the key would seem to be in communication of the benefits to mentors and the gains students will make, both socially (fun and friends) and educationally (self, course and value by prospective employers).

Currently under discussion at Swinburne, Lilydale is the notion of a paid Senior Mentor who can assist with the planning and co-ordination of activities. It was found that in some other programs ‘Senior mentors’ (Charles Sturt) were paid a nominal amount and given a greater responsibility. This appears to have worked well and gives such students additional responsibility and the opportunity to gain higher level skills, as well as financial gains.

Promotion of ‘Internationalisation and exchange was a major issue which in itself impacted on the ability to recruit mentors to the program. A planned approach to promotion of internationalization was undertaken. This currently includes: Promotion
at Open Day, Session at Parents Info evenings, Flyers as part of mailouts, International Expo over three days per semester, and exchange briefings, student presentations and advertisement of these. The fruition of this promotion for the past two years has recently been noticeable, with the number of exchange applications increasing as well as the number of Mentor applications increasing.

2. Cultural Issues, Lack of Training

This has been mentioned previously in Sections 4 and 6. The lack of training for mentors was an issue as they were often uncertain as to what was required of them and it was found that they did not participate as well as they should. There were also issues with emergencies and how to deal with them, problems with their mentees and what to do and where to refer them and the like. The Training has since addressed these issues and the program now runs far more smoothly because of it.

Cultural Issues were also encountered as students were unsure how to talk to the students they were assigned. In order to address this, students, both mentors and the incoming international students, are each separately given a talk on cultures – what to expect, how we are different and the like. It has raised their awareness of what the issues may be. They also participate in a number of ice-breakers, designed to raise their awareness of other cultures and the way they may interact.

3. Mentor behaviour

It has been found from time to time that the Mentors may not behave as it is expected they should. The Position Description was introduced to address this issue and has been helpful in doing so, however, there are still occasionally problems. Some Mentors in the past have had personality clashes with each other, whilst others have clashed with their allocated student. In order to address this, the regular reporting during the semester was introduced and this provides a way of monitoring what is occurring. Students, both mentors and mentees are also told to approach the Mentor Co-ordinator if there are any issues and this has become very important in ensuring any difficulties are addressed early. In some cases students may be re-allocated, either at the request of the mentor or mentee.

There have been cases where a Mentor has been asked to leave the program as they have 1/ not been fulfilling their duties or 2/ behaving inappropriately toward the mentees and sometimes other mentors. This has included bullying behaviour, constant negative behaviour right through a situation where sexual harassment occurred. In these cases it has been very important to have a Mentor Co-ordinator who is a member of staff to deal with these issues.

Conclusion

The Mentor Program has been a success at Swinburne, Lilydale and is gaining recognition on a worldwide basis. This is occurring through word of mouth by the students to their own countries. It is also occurring as our own local students take up exchange opportunities and promote Swinburne, Lilydale.

It has also been found that a number of other activities are occurring as a part of the Mentor Program. For example, cohorts of previous incoming exchange are forming in home institutions, almost as a small alumni group, and are passing on their experiences to others. There are also web sites springing up as well as Chat rooms.
The program will continue to be evaluated in order to ensure we are providing for the incoming students and a number of ideas have already been either commenced ‘floated’. These include:

- Interactive CD ROM for use by international students, agents and families (currently under construction. Has been given to 2 students, 1 local and 1 international as a project for credit)
- Award for top exchange student (incoming and outgoing) each semester
- Dinner for Exchange students, Semester 1 full degree international students and International Office.
- Evaluation of the identified Mentor Benefits.
- Further investigation of the impact of the Mentor Program on past exchange students, international students and their mentors
- Possibility of a paid Senior Mentor
- Exploration of a subject for credit utilizing the Mentor Program

From the feedback we have received, the program has been beneficial to not only the incoming students but also to the local students, and has been an integral part of the ‘Internationalisation’ of the Swinburne, Lilydale community.