Grant Final Report Form

Principal Investigators (PIs) are required to submit final reports within **60 days** of their EIA grant end date. A delinquent report may jeopardize or delay future Network funding. The information you provide helps us improve and justify the continuation of this grant program. The Network may also contact PIs for longer-term impact reporting and may request permission to use elements of these reports in Network activities (Conference sessions, Academy sessions, etc.) and communication both within the CSU system and to external stake-holders.

Summary Grant Information	
Grant Title:	Grounding Responsive Action with Community and Empathy (GRACE) Peer Mentor Program
PI Name:	Grace Yoo
PI Campus:	San Francisco State University
Grant Start Date (month/YYYY):	June 2022
Grant End Date (month/YYYY):	June 2024
Final Report Submission Date:	July 2024

Major Outcomes

1. Summarize your project's outcomes against the original goals proposed for advancing equitable student learning, engagement, progression, and completion.

The goal of GRACE was to expand SF State's capacity to improve the retention and graduation of students by offering peer support in courses housed in the College of Ethnic Studies. In writing the initial proposal, we hoped to achieve the following outcomes: 1) increased student engagement and sense of belonging, 2) increased connection and community with others, 3) increased information on campus opportunities and campus support for wellness and career preparation.

The program was piloted over the course of 3 semesters - Spring 2023, Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 - where we had 11 Peer Mentors in 13 undergraduate Ethnic Studies classrooms that served a total of 367 students. In the classroom, Peer Mentors conducted community building activities at the start of each class, met with students for individual support, and sent weekly emails to remind students of class work as well as campus resources available for students. Outside of the classroom, Peer Mentors worked with campus partners, such as the Undergraduate Advising Center and faculty in the College of Ethnic Studies, to outreach to students and increase student engagement in class.

Overall, the GRACE Peer Mentor program has been highly successful in achieving the original goals, as seen in responses from faculty and students in the evaluation survey sent out at the end of each semester. Peer Mentors have been able to increase student engagement and sense of belonging on campus and in the classroom through their work and the meaningful connections they have built with students.

2. Comment on additional outcomes not directly associated with the project (e.g., partnerships formed, additional funding support gained).

We formed partnerships with SFSU's First Year Experience, Responsive Education for Access, Community, and Hope (REACH), and Access, Relevance, and Community (ARC) peer mentor programs for peer mentors to train with each other and share best practices for mentoring in the classroom. Peer Mentors and Faculty in our program also worked with Kyle Wallace-Jordan, the College of Ethnic Studies' Academic Advisor, to outreach and connect with students who were absent from classes. Lastly, GRACE Peer Mentors also partnered with Dr. Michael De Anda Muñiz to host Liberation Vibes on campus, which was a bimonthly campus event where professors in the College of Ethnic Studies performed DJ sets in the campus quad. Peer Mentors tabled for the College of Ethnic Studies, which provided more information to SF State students about the classes and faculty at the College while building connections with the students at SF State.

3. Specify any unanticipated project developments (i.e., unanticipated barriers or unexpected wins).

Students highly enjoyed the presence of a Peer Mentor in their classes. With the support of a Peer Mentor, students found them to be extremely useful and imperative to their success in their classes and as a student at SF State. The weekly emails that Peer Mentors sent to students supported the students' struggles with procrastinating and managing work for their classes. Overall, students found their classes with Peer Mentors to be highly enjoyable in comparison to their classes without Peer Mentors.

An unanticipated win has been that peer mentoring has been supporting the retention and graduation efforts in the College of Ethnic Studies.   We have been working closely with our academic counselor to identify students who may not be attending class. These efforts have been a win in that peer mentoring has allowed us to support students who may not have been attending class.   Also an unanticipated win has been linking peer mentoring with the efforts of a Department of Education AANAPISI grant to fund peer mentoring for this next academic year.

4. If applicable, comment on any longer-term outcomes you anticipate from your Equity in Action Grant-funded project. Also please estimate anticipated achievement dates (month and year).

We hope that the results from piloting the GRACE Peer Mentor Program can help the campus in understanding how peer mentoring could be institutionalized on a campus.   A long term outcome would be to institutionalize peer mentoring in the College of Ethnic Studies as we have already seen its effectiveness with retention in our classes. In the short-term, peer mentoring will continue in the college through a Department of Education AANAPISI grant for the next three years.

Assessment and Communication

5. Describe efforts to communicate and disseminate project outcomes within your campus.

We used the College of Ethnic Studies' webpages and Instagram page to advertise information about the project and share the work that our Peer Mentors have done both in and out of the classroom. Similarly, Peer Mentors communicated regularly with students via Canvas messaging and Email. This Fall, we expect the peer mentoring program to share findings at the College of Ethnic Studies Chairs Council. We also met weekly with our college academic counselor regarding peer mentoring.

6. Provide a summary of your assessment activities and results, where available.

This pilot program ran over the course of 3 semesters: Spring 2023, Fall 2023 and Spring 2024. In these 3 semesters, the program had a total of 11 peer mentors that served 367 students in 13 Ethnic Studies classes.

At the end of each semester, students and faculty completed evaluation surveys to assess the pilot program. These surveys asked the students and faculty to evaluate the presence and impact of their Peer Mentors on their sense of community, belonging, effectiveness, and engagement in the classroom on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not effective or not helpful) to 5 (very effective or very helpful). Responses were very positive, with students and faculty rating their Peer Mentors at an average of 4.5 or above (see Table 1).

Findings from our evaluation show that Peer Mentors in Ethnic Studies classrooms were highly valued, especially in the ways that they built community, engaged students, and helped students navigate campus as schools are transitioning back to in-person classes. Peer Mentor responsibilities, such as their weekly emails and individual meetings, were highly effective in the classroom because of the extra support that Peer Mentors provide for students at SF State.

We also gathered qualitative data for a fuller understanding of the impact of Peer Mentors on students and faculty in the classroom. Responses showed that the Peer Mentors have been extremely impactful on students and faculty in the classroom, with hopes that all classes have a Peer Mentor to provide further support for students on both individual and community levels.

One faculty member shared: "I have greatly appreciated my mentor and the program, and hope that it will continue! These are the sorts of resources that will truly make a difference in meeting our equity goals."

A student shared: "They always provide resources at the end of class that I never heard of before. They were kind and welcoming. They were always available to talk to. They provided fun activities during class"

Another student said: "[She] was super approachable, friendly, and encouraging straight from day one. Her weekly emails helped keep me on top of homework deadlines, her ice-breaker exercises were innovative and fun, and her demeanor brought a warm, welcoming energy to each class. [She] regularly checked in with me about my progress with the coursework, and I do not know if I would have been as successful in this class without her aid."

Peer Mentors made the classroom and campus a welcoming and safe environment for student learning. Their knowledge of campus resources, friendly attitudes, and mentorship skills has provided much support for students in achieving their academic goals while helping faculty foster an engaged community of scholars.

Table 1. Effectiveness of GRACE Peer Mentors in the Classroom

On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the most effective, how effective was your peer mentor in the following:	Average (n=86)
Create and cultivate community within the classroom	4.8
Engage and facilitate academic success strategies	4.8
Engage and facilitate active learning in the classroom	4.8
Assist in the writing process in the classroom	4.6
Locate and support institutional resources for students in the classroom	4.8

Lessons Learned

7. As you reflect on the strategies and activities implemented during this grant, which were successful?

Peer Mentors contributed to the success of students in lower-division Ethnic Studies classes by providing students with companionship, community, and a sense of belonging to campus. Weekly emails from Peer Mentors were especially helpful for students to know about campus events while serving as a reminder for students' assignments in the class. Similarly, Peer Mentors provided individual support for students through check-ins either at the beginning of class or at a scheduled time outside of class. Peer Mentors' outreach focused on the students who were consistently absent from class after the first few weeks, which has been an ongoing issue on college campuses as we all transitioned back to in-person or hybrid learning. They worked with the Undergraduate Advising Center to get in initial contact with those students and provided check-ins to identify barriers that prevent students from coming to class. While Peer Mentors struggled to receive responses from students, their consistent and friendly methods of correspondence made students feel more comfortable and supported in their classes with Peer Mentors, resulting in better attendance grades and student engagement in the classroom. The partnerships formed with First Year Experience, REACH, ARC, Undergraduate Advising, and College of Ethnic Studies Faculty has been the most successful in building strong relationships and connections among students, Peer Mentors and SFSU faculty. Trainings with campus partners were weekly and continual, which helped increase campus presence and visibility while building a strong Peer Mentoring community for student support. In Spring 2024, GRACE Peer Mentors worked with REACH and ARC Peer Mentors to facilitate Study Circles at the College of Ethnic Studies, which is a campus space for students to study, complete work, receive support, and build community with other students. The presence of GRACE Peer Mentors at the Study Circles, in addition to the REACH and ARC Peer Mentors, provided even more support for students who are enrolled or not enrolled in their classes.

8. By comparison, what strategies and activities did you find were unsuccessful?

One of the strategies that were not as successful were the estimates of working hours for Peer Mentors. In the first two semesters of the program, Peer Mentors could only work a maximum of 5 hours per week, which was based on how much time each of their weekly responsibilities would take, such as mentoring in class (2 hr 30 min), meeting with students (30 min per meeting), weekly correspondence emails (30 mins), or class preparation with faculty (30 min). Many of these weekly responsibilities took a lot more time than all of us anticipated, especially in meeting with students and class prep with faculty. For the Spring 2024 semester, we increased the maximum amount of weekly hours for Peer Mentors to 10 hours so that Peer Mentor work accurately matches their responsibilities while also being fairly compensated for the work they do.

9. Given your experience with the Equity in Action Grant Program, what changes would you recommend to better support you toward your goals?

No changes are needed at this time. **The Equity in Action Grant Program has been helpful in helping us reach our programmatic goals.**

10. What can the CSU Student Success Network do to help your campus in its efforts to identify, understand, and disrupt inequities in our system?

The CSU Student Success Network can help fund similar programs to identify, understand, and disrupt inequalities in our system. Knowing and navigating campus and its many resources have been difficult for students, especially coming out of the pandemic. By having Peer Mentors to encourage and increase connection between students and the campus through building community with them, we were able to identify and address students' needs in order to ensure student holistic success. Moreover, Peer Mentor programs provide jobs for students so they can have more financial stability when living in cities with a high cost of living, such as San Francisco. As students, Peer Mentors also gain many useful and transferable skills from the experience of being in the classroom and working with faculty and program partners, which can assist in securing jobs and opportunities for community leadership post-graduation.