

# Study finds mentoring key to influencing pupils to apply to University

October 11 2013

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(Phys.org) —Appropriately-timed student mentoring schemes can have a large and substantiate effect on influencing secondary pupils from disadvantaged areas apply to university. These are the findings of a pilot study, published today, that tested the impact and delivery of mentoring on pupils' intentions to apply to university.

The Economic and Social Research Council [ESRC]-funded experiment, conducted in a Bristol secondary state school over a single morning and timed to coincide after a session given to pupils on personal statements, comprised a series of short presentations by trained mentors about [university](#) life.

Four [mentors](#), who are second and third-year students at the University

of Bristol, gave the same talk to 53 Year 12 students (aged between 16 and 18) who had been randomly allocated to four groups, which varied as to the type of mentoring the [pupils](#) received and the timing at which some questions were answered.

Before and after each talk, students were also asked to complete a survey that asked them questions about their aspirations including whether any of their close family members or friends attended university and indicate (on a scale of one to ten) how likely they were apply to university or the University of Bristol.

Survey data showed that students asked to estimate how likely they were to attend university, after receiving the mentoring stated they were 19 per cent more likely to apply to university than when they were asked to make the same estimation before. Results showed no difference in the groups that had a longer mentoring talk with shorter questions or vice versa.

Michael Sanders, the study's lead author and a PhD [student](#) in the University's Centre for Market and Public Organisation, said: "Despite attempts to increase rates of university enrolment from disadvantaged backgrounds, statistically these people are still less likely to attend university and if they do apply, they apply to less prestigious universities.

"Although further study is needed to determine the longer-term effects, these findings show that an appropriately-timed inspirational [young person](#) talking about university education is sufficient to encourage others. Most importantly, even if the effects of this mentoring are short-lived, this time of a young person's life may represent a 'teachable moment' at which their behaviour can be positively influenced by a low-cost intervention that can have a positive and significant effect.

"Student mentoring programmes, such as the one trialled in this paper

need not necessarily be primarily concerned with increasing academic attainment, but rather aspiration and understanding by poorer students that 'people like me' can attend excellent academic institutions."

The paper is titled "Aspiration & Inspiration - A pilot study of mentoring in schools."

Provided by University of Bristol

Citation: Study finds mentoring key to influencing pupils to apply to University (2013, October 11) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-10-key-pupils-university.html>

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