

How One Inclusive Postsecondary Program is Improving Soft Skills for Students Futures

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Mason LIFE Program

Goal for our students:

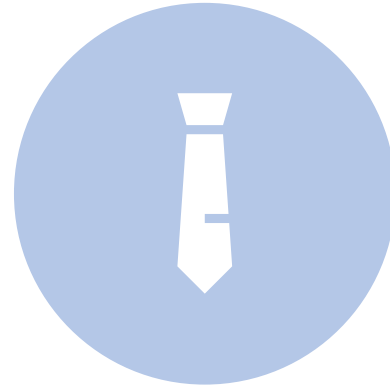
Employment

Independent
living

This requires:



HARD SKILLS



SOFT SKILLS



What are soft skills:

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Resiliency
- Flexibility
- Relationships



What qualities are employers looking for in their employees?

- Monaghan (2014)
 - What employers want in employees is changing. No longer just looking for performing technical tasks, but possess a range of 'soft' skills
 - National Association of Colleges and employers (NACE) 2009 & 2013 report the 'Job outlook'
 - Five attributes employers are seeking
 - Communication skills
 - Leadership
 - Analytical/quantitative skills
 - Strong work ethic
 - Ability to work on a team



What qualities are roommates looking for?

- Someone who does their chores
- Someone who is respectful
- Gets along with
- Be social with

These are all soft skills!



IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE FOCUS ON
SOFT SKILLS JUST AS MUCH AS WE
FOCUS ON HARD SKILLS



WE CAN DO THIS IN A COLLEGE
SETTING



A CHANCE FOR ALL STUDENTS TO
GAIN EXPERIENCES AND SKILLS
BEFORE ENTERING 'THE REAL WORLD'

Mason LIFE Program

Behavioral Health Component

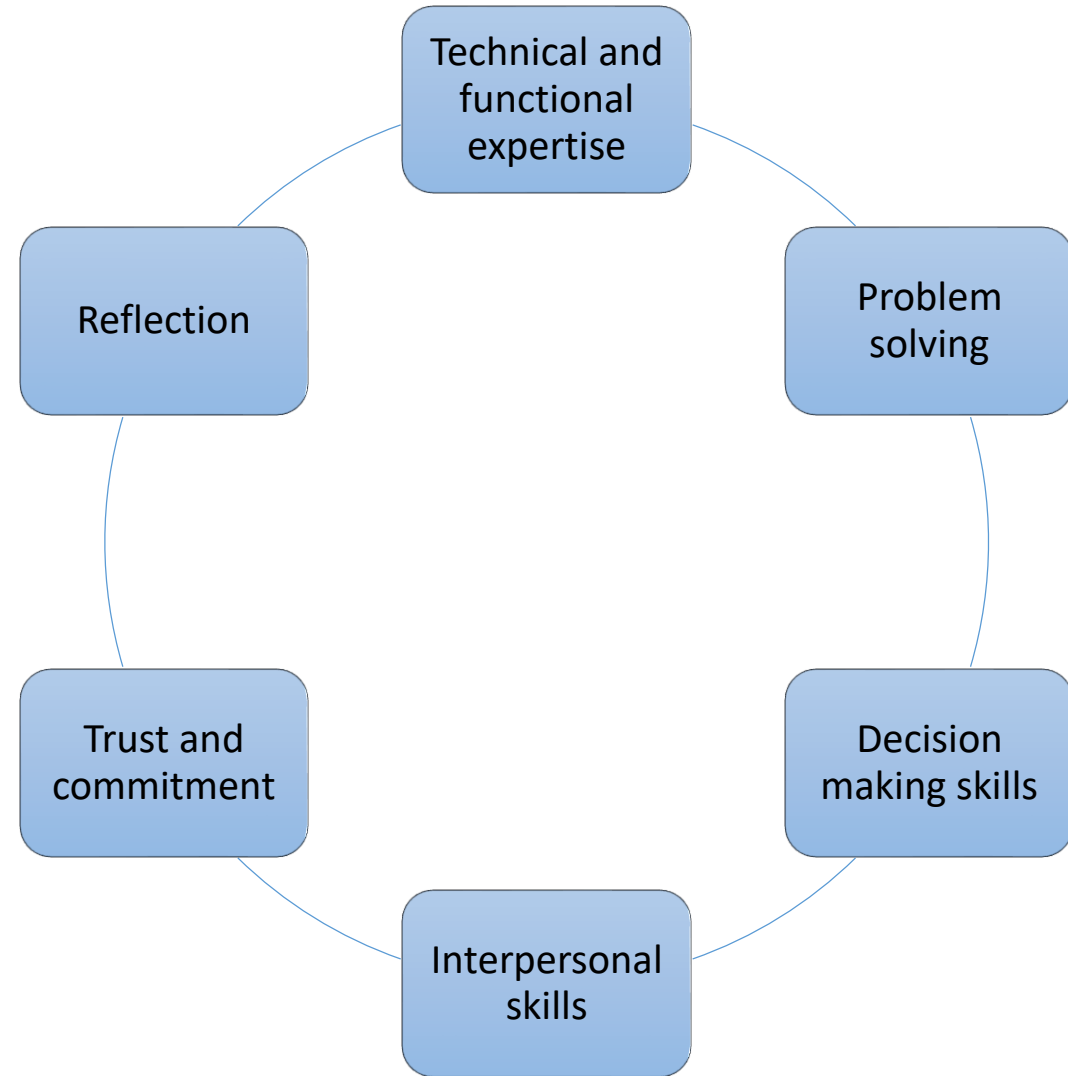
- Self-Regulation 1 year course – mandatory for 1st years
- Human Growth and Development – 2 year course – mandatory for 1st and 2nd years
- Communication & Conversation Class
 - Social thinking & skills
- Supporting Individuals
 - One on one meetings to address needs as they emerge
 - Teach strategies
- Assessing Needs
 - Recommending referrals to private providers when displaying signs of clinically significant difficulties
 - Crisis team offered thru local Community Service Board
 - Clinical Psychologist consults with program once a week
 - Depression screening
 - Assistant Director – BCBA-D with experience in mental health also observes for other clinically significant difficulties
- Team Building for all students
 - Weekly
 - Groups of 3-6
 - Lead by Graduate of Counseling students
 - Monitored by Assistant Director

Research in Team Building



- Joseph & Payne (2004)
 - Monitoring and supporting of student teams are positively correlated to team cohesion and improved student learning outcomes
 - Continuous faculty monitoring and supporting leads to
 - Student performance outcomes being better aligned
 - Individual and team performances increase toward optimum values
- Joseph (2012)
 - Over three years, studied teams of students learning together in an academic class. Some groups were closely monitored and supported, some were not.
 - Measurements of learning showed those in intervention had most support
- Learning takes time

What is a
successful
team?





Team Building at Mason LIFE

- Supporting the development of connections within residential units and among commuters
- Residential students grouped by units OR commuters in groups of 3-5
- Meet with Mental Health Liaison once weekly for 30 minutes
- Discuss concerns/conflict as well as triumphs occurring in the dorms
- Teaching of team building skills
- Monthly cook & eat together nights

Conflicts

What conflicts did you have roommates back in college?

Same for our students

- Chores
- Borrowing/taking
- Noise
- Social
- TV

Celebrations

What celebrations did you have roommates back in college?

Same for our students

- Sporting games
- Movie nights
- Game nights
- Social gatherings

When a unit gets stuck:

- Reminder of relationships/boundaries
- Expected/unexpected
- Size of the problem
- Pullout 1:1 and then bring back in
- Allowing all to talk

****as teaching of a skill****

****encouragement****

Example

- Student learning to communicate with his suitemate

Example

- One student sharing concerns with her two suitemates

When a unit
celebrates:

- Reminder of relationships/boundaries
- Expected/unexpected
- Size of the problem
- Pullout 1:1 and then bring back in
- Allowing all to talk

****as mastery of a skill****

****praise****



Example

- No conflicts or concerns
- Playing a team building game
 - Open ended questions
 - Practice conversation skills

Questions?

Thank you for attending!

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