

# Mentoring Mentors



## Extending the Library Instruction Classroom with a Peer Research Mentors Pilot Program

Criss Guy He/Him/His

Instruction, Research Support, and Digital Literacies Librarian

Warren Wilson College (Asheville, NC)

## Context

During the 2021-2022 academic year, I piloted a peer research mentors (PRM) program in the Warren Wilson College Library. Warren Wilson is a small liberal arts college and work school located in Asheville, NC. I used this program to provide an experiential learning opportunity for a small group of the library’s writing studio student workers (4 in the fall, 3 in the spring). This program used information literacy (IL) pedagogy to provide PRMs with a deeper dive into stages of the academic research process than is typically possible in a “one-shot” instruction session. Mentors applied their learning through independent and collaborative projects as well as student-centered outreach efforts concerning IL and library resources.

## Pedagogy

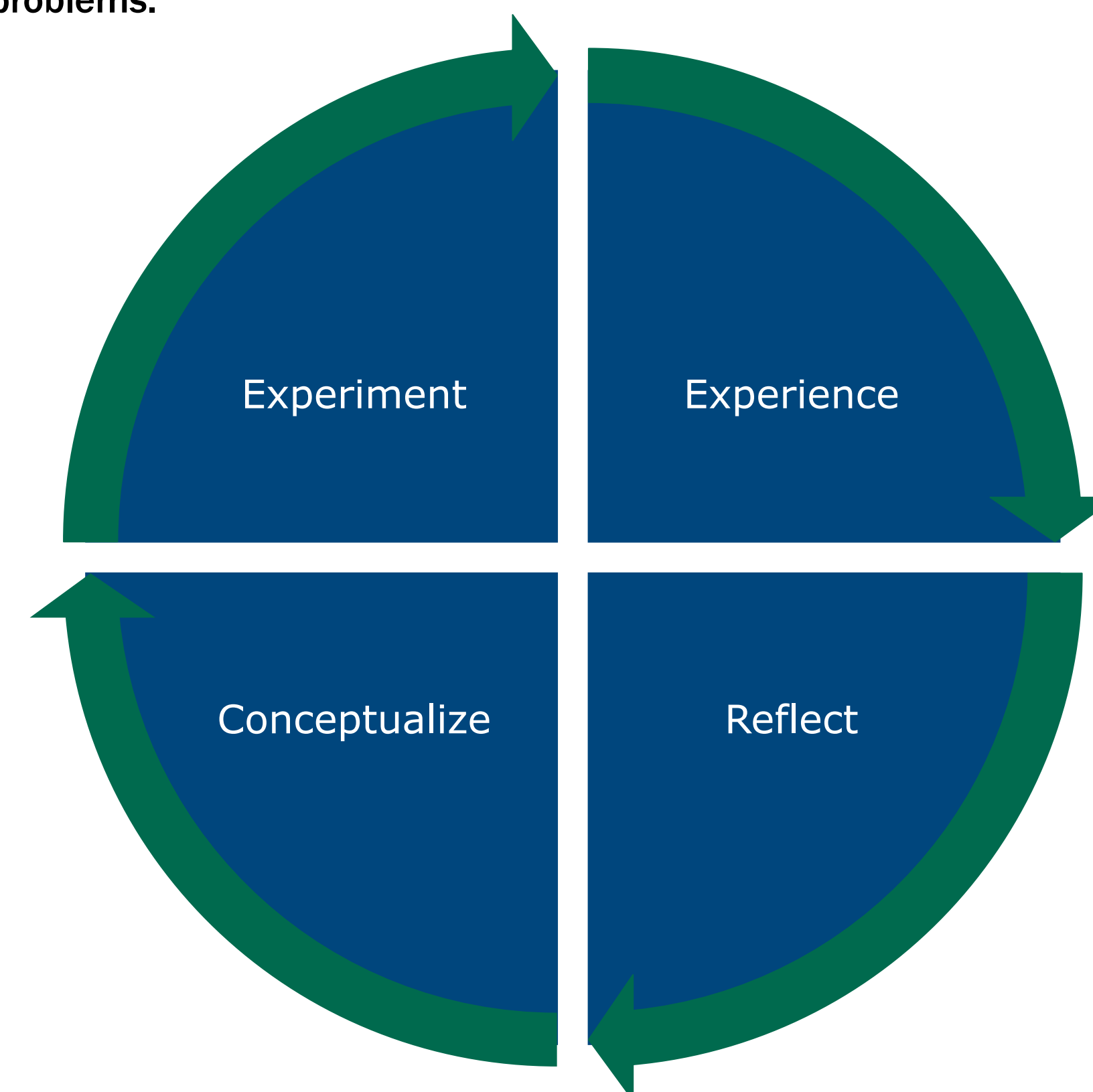
PRMs met weekly for 2hrs. These meetings served multiple pedagogical purposes. They were the primary setting for the group trainings I facilitated on different IL concepts. They also served as check ins about projects and program logistics. Lastly, PRMs used this time to work on research projects and give each other feedback.



In our second semester, I had PRMs collaborate on a user journey map of the undergraduate research paper writing process. PRMs drew from prior research experiences as well as insights gleaned from working with learners in writing studio appointments. The output of this exercise, shown above, became a vital learning tool. Subsequent training focused on naming and addressing pitfalls related to the stages that PRMs described.

## Projects

PRMs applied their knowledge of IL concepts through independent and collaborative research-focused projects. These scaffolded projects provided PRMs with extensive experiential learning opportunities. Experiential learning prioritizes knowledge acquisition through engaging with “real-world” settings and problems.



Experiential learning cycle adapted from Karin Kirk

### Role Play

PRMs acted out how they would support learners with context specific research needs.

### 1:1 Student Writing and Research Support

PRMs provided learners with advanced writing and research strategies during drop-in consultations and scheduled appointments.

### Resource Creation

PRMs made educational zines for learners and library users highlighting library resources and finals.

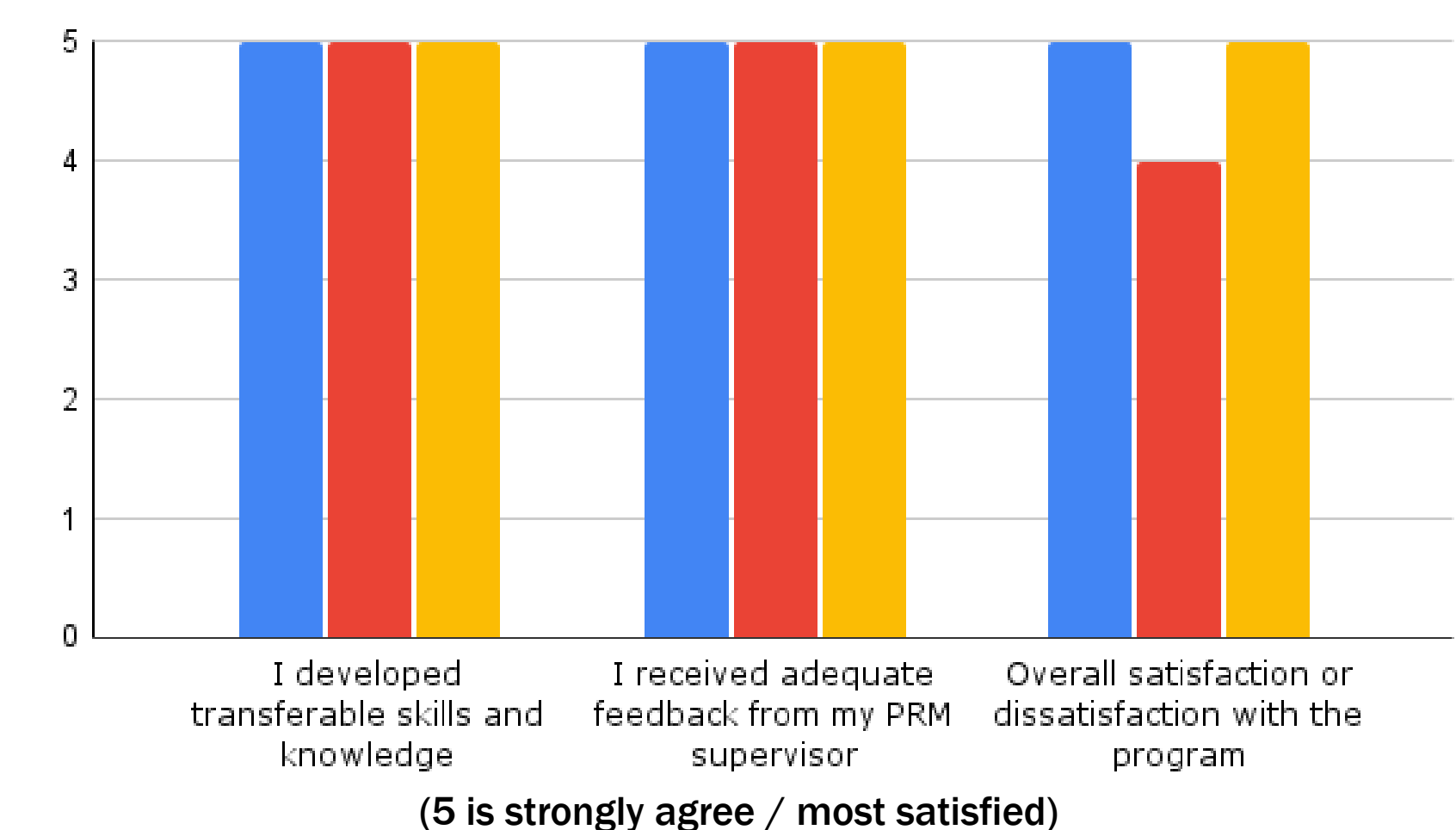
### Peer to Peer Training

PRMs led role-play activities with other writing studio student workers to highlight ways to support different research needs.

## Feedback

I used a digital, mixed method survey to collect feedback from PRMs. Questions addressed perceptions of the following themes: skill development, communication, program improvements, and interest in potentially continuing as a PRM. Responses below are from the 3 PRMs who completed the full pilot.

Full-Year Evaluation Likert Scale Responses



Qualitative Feedback

“Hands-on trainings and discussions were super helpful (and fun!).” – PRM 1

“If higher hour contracts were available for PRMs...that would be really helpful. I know that if I had had that option, in retrospect, I would have taken it.” – PRM 2

“[I am coming out of the program with] so many research skills ... Also tutoring skills & experience, especially with brainstorming and !!! asking !!! questions!!!!” – PRM 3

## Considerations

- » Leverage existing campus community strengths and partnerships.
- » Set clear expectations for success and sustainability.
- » Balance structure with flexibility and empathy.
- » Don’t underestimate the effort needed to create program resources.
- » Provide multiple feedback mechanisms and chances to apply learning.

## Resources

Use this QR code or the following link to access sources I consulted along with articles I used as training materials: <https://bit.ly/tilc-guy>

