

Operation CODY: Creating Opportunities for Disabled Youth

December 11, 2024

By: Raven Diaz





RUTGERS-NEW BRUNSWICK

Institute for Women's Leadership

The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders.

Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills.

This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to *practice* leadership *through* action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women's Leadership's website at <http://iwl.rutgers.edu>.

Goal Statement

Operation CODY aims to support disabled students at Rutgers University through a peer mentorship program that fosters academic and personal success.

It is essential for disabled students to feel empowered when engaging with campus life. Peer mentoring supports a sense of belonging and accessible resources.

Operation CODY will serve as a platform to build community, amplify voices, and connect students with the tools and support they need to thrive here and outside of Rutgers.



The Problem



Barriers to Success

- Only 34% of students with disabilities graduate within eight years in comparison to the 64% of non-disabled students (National Center for College Students with Disabilities, 2020)
- 3x more likely to face social isolation and exclusion

Stigma

- Lack of Understanding leads to limited opportunities for involvement and leadership
- 62% of disabled students report facing discrimination and stigma on campus (National Disability Institute, 2020)

Lack of Support Structures

- Peer mentorship programs tailored to students with disabilities are rare
- Students with disabilities are often left feeling unsupported with navigating academic and social challenge

Mission Statement



- Empower students with disabilities through peer mentorship to foster belonging, community, and opportunities for academic and career success at Rutgers University
- Create a welcoming and inclusive environment where mentees can connect with peers, learn from each other, building lasting relationships.
- Foster personal and professional growth through guidance and support

Intellectual Foundations



Retention

Low Retention Rates,
34% / 8-year graduation

(National Center for College Students with Disabilities, 2020)



Dropout Rates

50% more likely to dropout in their first year

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)

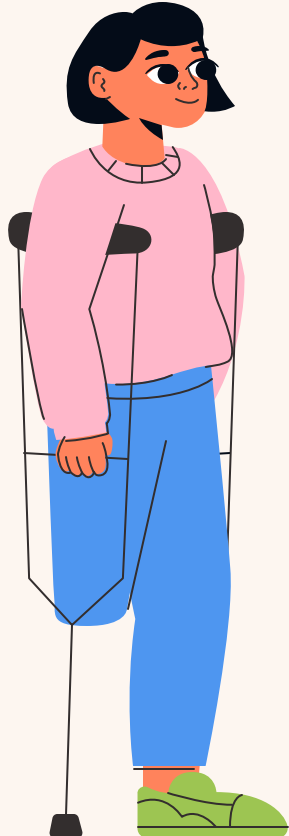


Isolation

40% feel isolated
62% have faced discrimination

(Journal of Postsecondary Education, 2021/National Disability Institute, 2020)

Operation C.O.D.Y



- A peer mentorship program designed to support disabled students.
- Collaboration with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to ensure accessibility and promotion.
- Roundtable Discussion in February, highlighting the experience of students with disabilities
- Peer mentorship benefits - 1.5x more likely to graduate, improved self-confidence (Center for Peer Mentorship, 2020)
- Improved employment outcomes with support (2.3x more likely to find employment) (Association of Higher Education and Disability, 2022)
- Bring Resources and Community to Students

Strategy



Collaborate

- ODS
- CSE
- CAPS
- Rutgers Recreation
- Cultural Centers



Plan

- Mentors + Mentee Pairings
- Implementation Dates
- Fishbowl Discussion



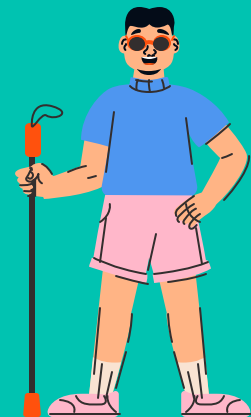
Advisors

- Javier Robles (rutgers co-chair for the disability studies committee)
- Nychey Michel/Carlie Andrews



Community

Fostering a community by students with disabilities for students with disabilities



Timeline

Research

- Determine the needs of Disabled students
- Best way of approach
- Collaborating Partners

Soft Launch

Roundtable Discussion
Start Mentor+Mentee
Sessions

Spring 2024

Fall 2024

Spring 2025

Fall 2025

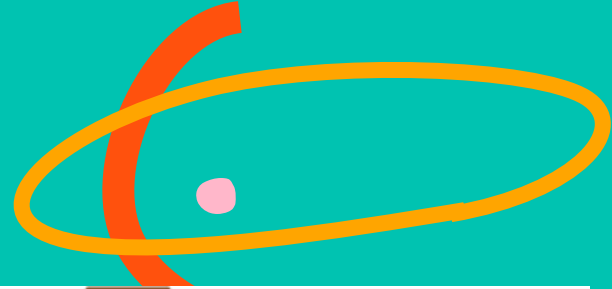
Getting Materials in Place

- Info Session
- Training Guide
- Google interest Form
- Group Me

Hard Launch

ODS shares with incoming freshman to continue stability and commitment to Operation CODY

Interest Form



Operation CODY: Becoming a Mentor

B *I* U  

Operation CODY is a mentorship program dedicated to connecting disabled students at Rutgers University with caring mentors. As a mentor, you will provide guidance and support in areas such as academic success, career planning, and personal development. Your role will involve offering advice, sharing your experiences, and helping students overcome challenges. Training sessions will be provided.

Email *

Valid email

This form is collecting emails. [Change settings](#)

Name *

Short answer text

Name



Short answer



Short answer text



Required



School Year (if Applicable)

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

Major/Minor *

Short answer text

Interest Form (2)

Email *

Short answer text

Why are you interested in becoming a mentor? *

Short answer text

Resume

📎 Add file

 [View folder](#)

How often can you commit to mentoring? *

- Weekly
- Biweekly
- Monthly
- Other...

In what areas do you feel comfortable providing guidance in? Any ones that you do not? (e.g. *
career planning, self advocacy, financial literacy, etc.)

Short answer text

What do you hope to gain from this program? *

Short answer text

Is there anything that would like me to know?

Short answer text

Final Note

Thank you for your interest in becoming a mentor with Operation CODY! I appreciate you taking the time to fill out this interest form.

Please remember that mentoring can be a rewarding experience, but it's also important to be aware of the role that you are taking on. To ensure that you feel prepared and supported in your role as a mentor, there will be an informational meeting and two training session provided to equip you with the necessary tools and resources to be successful.

Once you have attended these sessions, you will be ready to start mentoring and paired with a mentee! :)

Flyer



In addition to these promotional materials

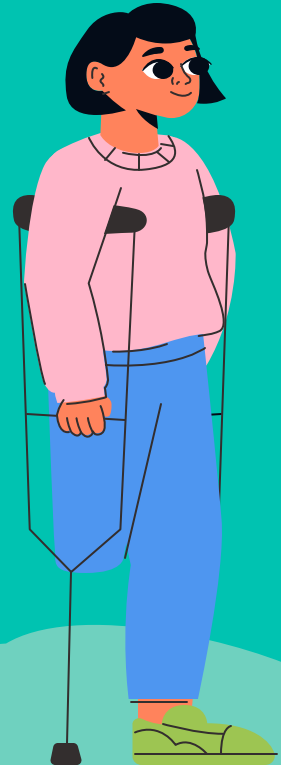
- Informational Session Slide Presentation
- 15-page document providing the goals, resources, and requirements of being an Operation C.O.D.Y mentor



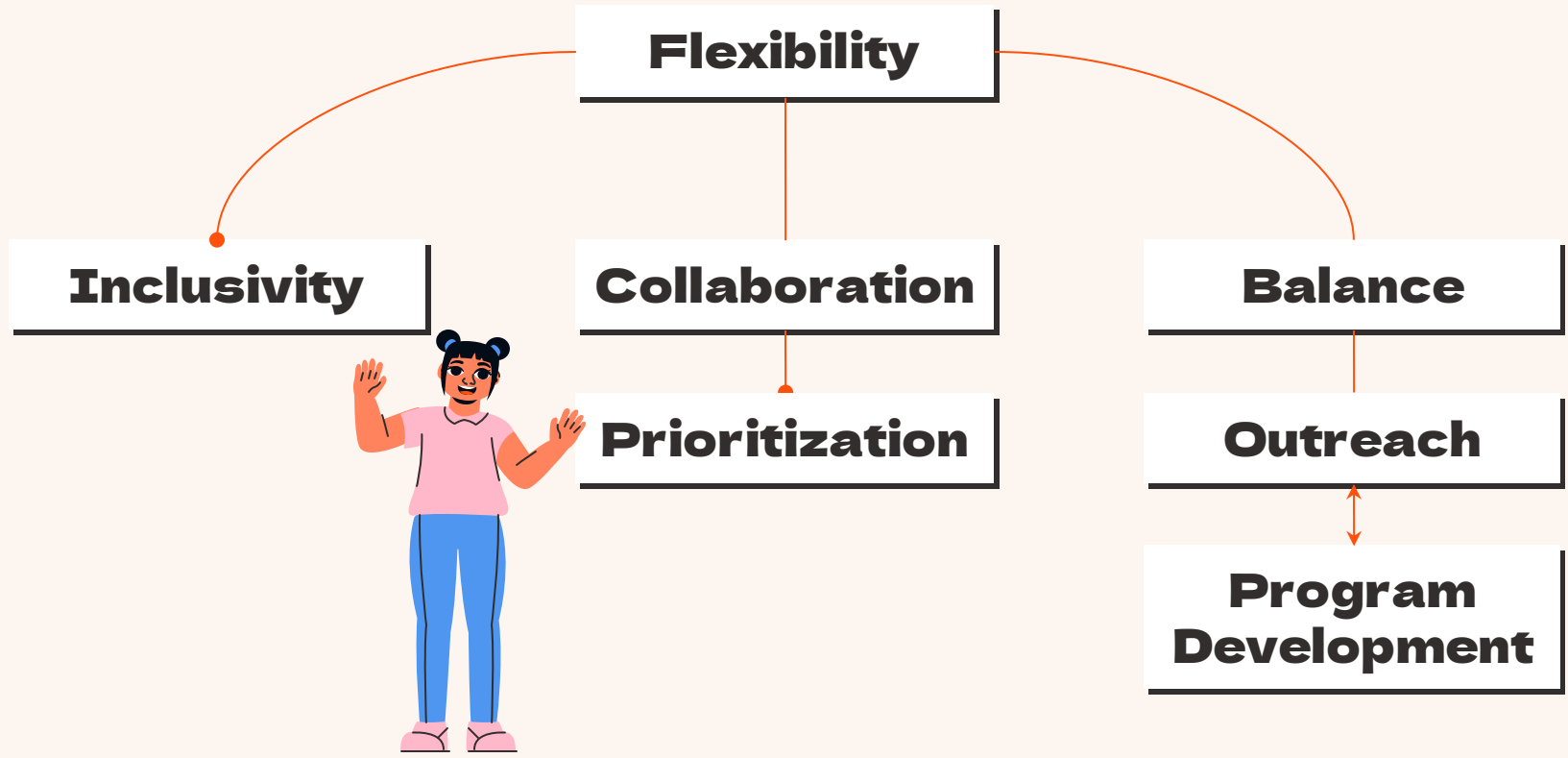
Feminist Leadership

How Operation CODY Embodies Feminist Leadership:

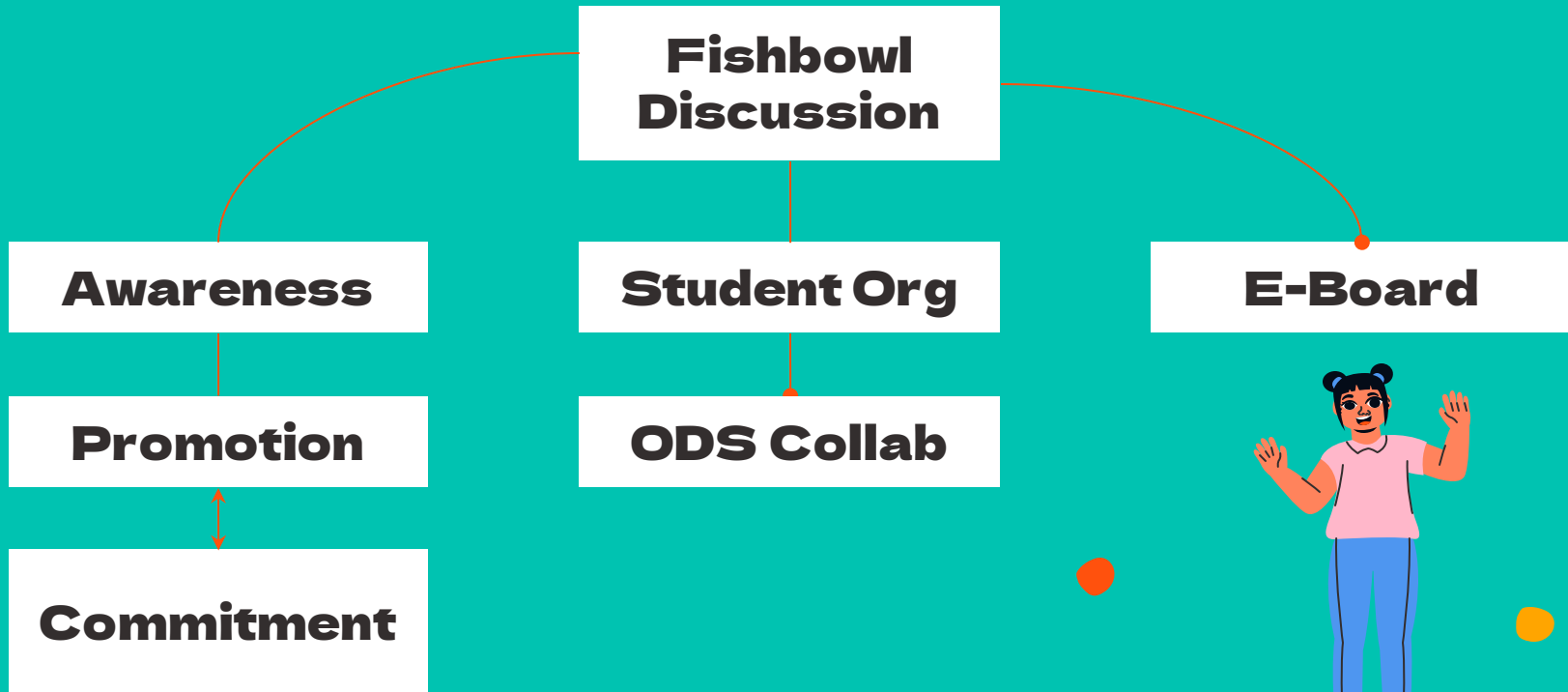
- Prioritizes marginalized voices
- Emphasizes collaboration and community-building.
- Challenges systemic inequities towards students with disabilities through mentorship and advocacy
- Creates space for students to co-lead discussions on their lived experiences
- Builds collaborative partnerships with the Office of Disability Services ODS and student organizations that support equity initiatives



Lessons



Long Term Goals



Bibliography

National Center for College Students with Disabilities. (2020). Data on graduation rates and social isolation among disabled college students. <https://www.nccsdonline.org>

National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Dropout rates of students with disabilities compared to non-disabled peers. <https://nces.ed.gov>

Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability. (2021). Stigma and discrimination among disabled students in higher education <https://www.ahead.org/professional-resources/publications/jped>

National Disability Institute. (2020). Experiences of stigma and discrimination among disabled students. <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org>

Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring. (2020). Mentorship and retention for disabled students. <https://www.mentoring.org>

Bibliography (2)

Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2022). The role of mentorship in fostering a sense of belonging.

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu>

Association on Higher Education and Disability. (2022). Employment outcomes for disabled students with academic support.

<https://www.ahead.org>

Diversity and Inclusion Research Report. (2021). Benefits of open discussions for disabled students.

<https://www.diversitybestpractices.com>

SUPPORT UNIVERSAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

A ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

BREAKING BARRIERS TO BUILD BRIDGES

THE UNTOLD EXPERIENCE OF BEING A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY

1 P.M.
17 FEB

DSC TRAYES HALL

100 GEORGE ST, NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ
08901

Everyone, regardless of ability, can benefit from an inclusive, accessible environment. Join the conversation.

- SNACKS WILL BE SERVED -

email ravendiaz.rd@gmail.com for accommodations