

Paul Cherchia STAY Tuned

[00:00:00]

Mei: Welcome back to Stay Tuned, supporting Transition Aged Youth.

This podcast is brought to you by the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research at UMass Chan Medical School Department of Psychiatry, and in partnership with our research sponsor at the National Institute for Disability Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research. I'm your host, Mei, and I'm your other co-host, Gillian.

Today we have on a special guest. His name is Paul Cherchia.

Do you wanna go ahead and introduce yourself, Paul?

Paul: Sure. Well thank you Gillian and Mei for having me on. Uh, again, my name is Paul Cherchia. I'm the assistant director at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University. Uh, and I help direct all of our college mental health education programs.

Um, one of them being, uh, [00:01:00] the PASS program, which we did in conjunction, um, with UMass Chan. I'm a licensed mental health counselor, um, by training and I have been, uh, at the center now for 10 years and I've been at Boston University for 15.

Gillian: That's amazing. It sounds like really great work.

Mei: Thank you so much for being here and I'm definitely excited to ask you more questions about PASS, given that I was working on PASS not too long ago, but I kind of hopped in at the tail end of things.

So I certainly don't know a lot of the history and the why behind it. So definitely excited to hear your story today and talk a little bit more about, um, the offerings you guys are currently providing with Pass.

Paul: Great. I'd love to share more about it.

Gillian: Sure. So how about we start right there and see [00:02:00] if you could explain to us kind of what Pass is, just a brief overview so we can get just the basics of it.

Paul: Sure. Well, to Start Pass is an acronym for Peer Academic Supports for Success. It is a peer coaching, um, intervention that we developed, um, as part of a larger research trial. Uh, we started WI with a, a pilot, uh, in 2017 and, and I expanded since there that I'll talk more about, but essentially. Peer coaching is where we have undergraduate students coaching other undergraduate students that are living with a mental health condition, um, that affects them academically or in some other areas of their wellbeing.

So the peer coaches are highly trained and then supervised weekly and meet one-on-one with, uh, two to three students, uh, for the entirety of the academic year. [00:03:00] And they help students achieve goals and build skills and get connected to resources around their academics, around their social connections, uh, their physical wellbeing, their emotional health, and kind of any other area of wellness that they are working on.

It's a great opportunity for. Peers to help other peers, um, and really feel connected to their campus, their community, build their self-efficacy, and then help them thrive inside and outside of the campus. So PASS is all about kind of this one-on-one peer connection goal, goal-driven, action-oriented, action-oriented, solution-focused, um, program that we've built really kind of over the course of the last eight years.

Mei: I definitely think that that is such important work and I have seen firsthand, I mean, how helpful it, it has been. Um, and what we would love to also [00:04:00] note is, as an expert on this, um, would you be able to fill us in on the current landscape of college mental health? Like what. Um, the plight of college students, and especially with, um, like the current state of mental health conditions on campus.

And, uh, what that, what that is like.

Paul: Yeah, it is a good question and, and really kind of the, the state of college mental health is really why this program started. Uh, essentially kind of what we were seeing is that. The need for mental health support on college campuses, uh, was a lot greater than many of the kind of availability or resources that were able to be accessed. just weren't, weren't able to keep up with the demand. Um, and, and I think that has uh, even more so when we really kind of started this program back in, in 2017. So seeing students that are looking [00:05:00] for emotional support, looking for therapy, uh, that are lonely on campus, uh, that are feeling kind of disconnected

and of, of course, like anything else, when you're not feeling good emotionally and mentally, um, that's very much intertwined to your ability to do well in the classroom and connects to all other areas of, of their wellbeing on campus as well.

Mei: I can definitely understand how, uh, wanting to sort out your mental health comes first before even thinking about classes or anything and how mental health can really affect your academic work.

I mean, I know for myself, I think that I was really fortunate to have access to counseling when I was in school, um, in addition to accommodations with disability services and those two in combination were really helpful, but I know that so many of my peers [00:06:00] were on wait lists to see counselors, and then once they finally got off the wait list, they didn't really mesh with that counselor.

So then it was quite, quite a journey to find the proper supports. Um, and even when they did it, it wasn't always quite like what they needed. So I, I certainly understand why PASS was created.

Paul: And, and I think what we were seeing too is that when students were looking for help, they were oftentimes turning to a friend or a peer, uh, before turning to a professional staff member, a licensed therapist.

And we kind of always looked at it that. You don't need to be a, a licensed mental health counselor, a social worker, to be able to listen, respond with empathy, to validate and to connect students to resources. And that's a big piece of what a peer coach does. They, they do not replace a therapeutic intervention, a counselor, a social work, [00:07:00] but rather they're a compliment to that.

And those are kind of some of the, the key skills that we. Train them on, be able to listen, respond and validate, and then connect students, um, to whether it be a therapeutic intervention or you know, other resources that also might kind of help support them with some of the challenges or experiences that they might be facing.

Gillian: Yeah, I think therapeutic interventions are vital, but I think having the peer aspect is so important too. Especially during young adulthood and in college.

Paul: And one thing I'll add too is, I mean, now more than ever students are feeling more disconnected. You know, obviously we're connected in, in

different ways with technology, but the, you know. Person to person. The interpersonal aspect I think is really lacking. So having that peer connection that way to kind of build that rapport and trust with a same age [00:08:00] peer, someone that's kind of going through some similar experiences, both being college students, makes a big difference too.

And, and maybe kind of how the, the work that they're doing, the support that they're giving, um, is perceived or understood.

Mei: Definitely, and I can imagine COVID also changed a lot of the ways that people connect. And um, I know that during, um, like quarantine past had to adapt to during that phase, but also like even after, I think, um, COVID had a lot of implications on the way we participate in activities and connect with others.

I'm sure that having a peer to connect with and sort of, um, be there to help you through whatever challenges you're facing is really helpful. Um, especially amidst the challenges that COVID posed.

Paul: And, and you know, the COVID did change, uh, PASS, but just as it kind of [00:09:00] changed everything else.

So we were able to adapt and be flexible and move to doing more work via Zoom, um, or other kind of forms of technology. But since then, since we've kind of regressed or kind of got back to, to a normal more of a normal life. Students wanna meet in person. Students don't wanna connect over Zoom, they don't wanna do peer coaching 'cause we can still offer that, especially if it's a logistical barrier or, but that, that's very rare that you get that request.

So I always hear from the coaches that students wanna meet, they meet out on campus, they're at the coffee shops or at the student unions. They're in public places where young adults are also gathering and they're there with a peer. Which is very kind of normal behavior too, and they're just kind of working on some of these goals again, whether they be academic or in other areas of wellbeing.

Gillian: Yeah, in person is definitely a different type of connection and I think being able to actually physically go and do [00:10:00] something with the person helps build that confidence and the self-efficacy I imagine.

Paul: Yeah, the, that's a, that's a good point, Jillian. I mean, the, the confidence, specifically the self-efficacy.

So, you know, students believing in themselves that they can complete a task, uh, kind of in any area of their life is something that we really targeted, uh, with pass and something that coaches are kind of always trying to help students build skills, um, in those specific areas. But I know self-efficacy is something that students that were coached, kinda shared that they were able to, to build upon and that we were actually able to measure. Um, as I think I mentioned, that pass was, was part of a randomized control trial, um, that we did. So it is an evidence-based, um, practice. Um, and you know, initially we've gotten some pretty good, um, results that we're kind of still digging through the data on a little bit, but the initial findings are really encouraging.[00:11:00]

Mei: I mean, speaking of which, would you mind giving us like a higher level overview of the research and testing that went into developing PASS?

Paul: Yeah. I'll do my best. I, I always, um, humble myself, 'cause I, I'm, I'm not a researcher. I, I am a, you know, a clinician kind of by training. Um. But, but essentially pass, uh, was a randomized control trial, meaning that, uh, we would recruit students into the program and randomly half the students would either work with a coach and half the students would only meet with.

F like a, a resource specialist that we call it. They would have like a, an initial consult and kind of be given some resources that they could potentially be taking advantage of. But that was it. It was kind of a one-time thing. Whereas, whereas if you went into the actual coaching intervention, then you worked with your coach each [00:12:00] week for the entire duration of the full academic year, essentially September through May.

Um, and, and what we were kind of looking at is where students could improve, um, around their self-efficacy, their self-determination, uh, their kind of social connections, uh, with the goal that they could, uh, continue to stay enrolled, uh, at their college and university, uh, and then graduate and, um. We've, we've certainly seen initially that students that worked with a coach, uh, improved in a lot of those areas that we were targeting as opposed to the students that were.

That were in the control group. Um, so originally we did a, a pilot, kind of a pilot study to get this off the ground in 2017. Um, in 2018, we did a, our first randomized control trial. Um, we did [00:13:00] kind of a, a, a phase two as well where we recruited a lot more students. Uh, we had partnered then with UMass Boston and, and brought the research to there as well, so we could kind of compare what the program looked like at Boston University, uh, uh, opposed to, uh, UMass Boston.

So, so two schools that are close in location, but, but very different and kind of how they're made, uh, made up, uh, dynamics wise. Um, and then, you know, since we've gotten really kind of good. Initial findings. We also, um, implemented the program at Rowan University in New Jersey in the 2023, 2024 academic year.

So essentially, being able to kind of showcase that this program, PASS, that we built can be taken and really kind of, you know, dropped in to any school and still kind of have the, the same effects that we were able to find within [00:14:00] the research. So, so it's very transferrable, um, regardless of the school, the population that, that you're working with.

And when we implemented at Rowan University, I, I worked with their head of. The counseling department and we did a kind of a train the trainer model where I taught them about the program and kind of went over some of the key skills and components, uh, to get their coaches kind of up to speed. And then, uh, each week I would consult with them around some of the successes that they were experiencing and then navigate some of the challenges that they were experiencing weekly as well, um, to kind of help.

Uh, have like a, a strong kind of implementation to the, to the research and the, the program that we had built, um, at, at Boston University and UMass Boston.

Gillian: Wow, that's amazing. That's so cool. That's great that it's, the schools like even just thinking about be at Boston University and UMass Boston. They [00:15:00] are very different schools and that's great.

Um, in terms of recruitment. How was that? Um, how did students and coaches or even schools find out about it and were there any barriers?

Paul: Yeah. When we first started, I think, I think it was slow in terms of recruitment. It was a kind of a new program. It was part of a, a research study. So I would kind of go around and.

Network with some of the offices that might be able to refer students to us. Like the, like the counseling office, the behavioral medicine office at Boston University, um, the disability and access office, the educational resource center. Uh, some faculty and other staff as well. Um, and, and it, it did take a lot of time and effort, uh, to make those connections.

Uh, we did some advertising as well, um, just to be able to kind of. [00:16:00] Reach as many students as we could so that we could kind of get to that number

so that we had kind of a strong number for the research side of things. I think over time it got a little bit easier as the program grew and we saw some success and we made partnerships, uh, with administrators, faculty and and, and staff at the university.

Uh, it was a great opportunity to kind of get to, to UMass Boston and work with them. And, um, this is another kind of unique aspect of the program where. You know, the, the program lived at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation here at BU, which is a center located on campus. And when we went to UMass Boston.

Uh, we were kind of part of their, uh, disability office, I guess, that they might have a slightly different name than them. Um, but they worked with kind of a lot of students that were potentially coming in for other reasons, and then they had an opportunity, again, to refer the student, to add on, like the kind of the peer coaching.

[00:17:00] Service, which was a kind of a great opportunity for them. And with, with Rowan, uh, I was working with their counseling office. Same thing where students would come in looking for counseling services, they would get that, but then also be offered the opportunity. To work with a peer coach in addition to the actual counseling that they were getting.

So referrals kind of come in from all different places. Certainly it, it took a little while for us to get going, but I think we kind of knew eventually as, as the years passed on who to talk to and who might be seeing some of these students that could benefit from the program. But it's also unique too because the program can live in different offices at different universities, depending upon what that school looks like and kind of.

What the makeup is. So, um, each school it was, it was a, a different office and a different person. Different person with a different educational background running the program. Which again, I think speaks to the unique aspect of, of PASS and then the transferability of it [00:18:00] as well, where we can kind of move to different colleges and universities and, uh, work within different offices and have more opportunities to have a, a broader access to students that might benefit from this.

Mei: I think you had gotten into a little bit of the different components of PASS, um, but would you be able to go through each of the different, um. Pieces of PASS that students receive when they sign up.

And also I, I know like a big part of pass is also what the coaches receive as well, the benefits that coaches can get from pass too.

Paul: Yeah. So if you're a student and you're looking for that, uh, peer coach, uh, you would kind of sign up, essentially meet with me. I would learn a little bit more about what you're looking for.

Um, you fill out like kind of a brief application that allows us to really kind of get a sense. Some of the areas that you're looking to be coached on. And then I use that to help [00:19:00] match the student with a coach that might have some of the experience or background or similarities in terms of major or other aspects to help match them up.

And then the student gets to coach each week with the student. Um, but, but coaching is not like therapy where, you know, you meet for 50 minutes time's up. See you next week. But rather there's a lot of continuity in the communication. It's a high touchpoint process since it's so goal driven and solution focused, you might meet on a Monday.

Um, and if you're working towards, uh, an academic deadline that you have that Friday, you're probably touching base again on Thursday to help track the progress, you know, of that goal, assess or reassess kind of how it's going. Reset expectations effectively communicate if we feel like we're behind a little bit.

So, uh, there's multiple touchpoint. Uh, with the coach throughout the week, which really helps with supportive accountability and, and making progress towards these schools, again, whether they be academic [00:20:00] or in other area of wellness. So the student and coach meet each week. They come together with the day and time that they wanna meet.

Um, they meet out on campus again. They can come up with where that needs to be or depending upon what they're working on. Some students will. Uh, study together. Some students will kind of set goals and then kind of work together. Some students might be wanna working on physical fitness or something like that.

The, the student and coach can go to the gym together and kind of provide that supportive accountability to help the student walk through that door, um, and not feel like they're alone or navigating the process. So. Coaching is flexible. It's adaptive. It doesn't have to be within like the four walls of an office or anything like that.

If anything, it's the opposite. Um, where they're out and about on campus. Um, being young adults, making those connections, um, it's a, it's a very collaborative process too, so the student kind of often has goals and homework, you know, that they're working on, and the coach does too, you know, whether they're [00:21:00] following up or maybe checking in on a Google Doc that they created to make sure that they're.

Progressing towards what they said and then following up to either validate that they've done that or connecting to see, uh, if they need again to kind of reset the expectations of that goal. And that happens each week throughout the entirety of the academic year. Uh, so it's a great built in additional support for students to take advantage of.

And, and if you're a coach, you know, it's a great opportunity to get unique experience. I always kind of say, this is not like your standard kind of work study, sit behind the desk type of job. Uh, we do extensive training in the beginning of the semester around some of the key skills with peer coaching around responding and empathy, uh, active listening, motivational interviewing.

We do, uh, like crisis response. We do suicide prevention. Uh, we go over kind of what coaching is and what coaching is not, and how coaching [00:22:00] differs from a more, uh, like therapeutic kind of aspect. Um, so, so really kind of good transferable skills that, that these coaches are able to get. Um, and, and we do quite a few weeks of, of training before coaches are, are paired up with the student to make sure that they're well equipped and well supported to kind of handle.

Any aspect of the job because they are working, you know, with a vulnerable population where students have identified they're living with a mental health condition. And it's, and it's a challenge. So we want, we want coaches to feel well supported as they're very autonomous when they're doing this role outside of the group supervision.

They're out on their own on campus. Um, meeting. Students and then they, you know, check in with me for one-on-one consultation throughout the week as needed. Um, otherwise each week we meet as a group and then we do group supervision where we can, can continue to skill build, um, around different activities or coaching skills that we can use, um, [00:23:00] as, as well as kind of highlight.

Successes that coaches have had, or challenges that coaches has had. Um, they never bring up any, you know, student information or anything like that. It's

always from the coach perspective. So as a coach, I did this and it went well. Or as a coach I'm struggling with this. Um, as, as much as BU is a big school, it's also, um, can feel small at times too.

So it's always from the, from the coach's perspective to keep the confidentiality of the, of the students in respect to the students they're working with, private. Um, so a lot of opportunity to get some great. Training around peer coaching, continued group supervision, weekly around coaching, and then they have the chance to really build some meaningful connections and have a, an opportunity to have a great way to like, have a really unique and rewarding experience as, as a peer coach.

And I feel like, uh, one of my part-time jobs is like writing [00:24:00] recommendations, um, for. For prior coaches that are, uh, applying to jobs or graduate school and things like that because they often use their experience as a peer coach, um, to help them kind of move forward in, in their, uh, career as well.

Gillian: That's amazing.

How do students find out about becoming a coach?

Paul: Well, sometimes, we'll, we'll post the job on like the student job board where you would look for any type of job. Uh, sometimes we'll have coaches that are, that are current coaches say, you know, I have a friend or so-and-so's in my class and I think they'd be a good coach. And then I'll meet with them and interview them and, and kind of see if they might be a good fit.

Um, one, one of the best kind of experiences too is students that are. I've been coached inquire about becoming a coach, and I think some of the best coaches we've had are students that have their own [00:25:00] lived experience with mental health. Um, they've been able to kind of go through some of those challenges and build up skills to now be, you know, thriving and being able to support others.

And I think that helps a lot with the peer-to-peer aspect of the program that the coaches. Also went through something similar. And again, that really helps build the rapport and connection as well. Um, so many of our coaches that we hire, have had their own lived experience, and that's, um, not necessarily a requirement, but I think something that's a big asset to, to being a, a peer coach as well.

So, um, a multitude of ways that you can become a coach. Oftentimes it's, it's a referral, you know, from a professor or a current coach or someone that's been coached. Um, if we don't feel like we have the. Right group or diverse group enough, um, then we'll post on the student job board and, and try and find the kind of the best peer coaches that we can.

Mei: Yeah, I [00:26:00] think the lived experience aspect is really vital, not just in peer work, but in so much of the work. I mean, here at the center as well. Um, lived experience is definitely a really important part of my day-to-day job. And even with our, uh, advisory boards here, lived experience is just so valid, so important, and can be so additive to numerous fields.

Um. In relation to mental health and, um, I definitely see it as an asset as well.

Paul: As a supervisor of the program. That's just something to be mindful of too. It's, it's really hard to support others when we're not supporting ourselves.

So as a supervisor, making sure that we're checking in on the coaches and that they're essentially kind of practicing what we're trying to preach to take care of themselves to. Um, make sure that they're doing what they need in, in terms of kind of self-care strategies, um, because otherwise, you know, it's really hard to be that solid kind of [00:27:00] peer coach for the, for the student that's looking up for that support, especially if you're feeling kind of worn down or, or facing some similar challenges too.

So we'll focus a lot on self care, uh, within group supervision each week as well.

Mei: I mean, it's, it's important, right? If you acknowledge that lived experience is or can be a really important part of the job and is an asset of the people who you're bringing on, I think then of course, like thinking about the best ways to support their unique needs is, is.

Vital, um, to success. So that is really incredible.

Gillian: So who would be the ideal student for past? I know we've kind of touched upon this, but

Paul: Yeah. I think that's something that I like about the program too. There's not necessarily an, an ideal student, um, but, but rather.

I think, you know, when, when we were kind of doing the [00:28:00] randomized control trial, we, you know, did more of, kind of a, a thorough

screen to make sure that what the student was saying, um, was impacting their kind of academics and kind of what they were looking for, kind of fit, uh, the student that we were trying to target and do the research on.

Um, now that we've wrapped up the research, it, you know, it really kind of starts with a, a conversation with myself where I can learn more about the student. Um, you know, identify some strengths that they have and then kind of listen to some of the challenges that they're facing, again, whether that be academics, uh, whether that be social, physical health, emotional health, environmental health.

Um, and, and essentially it kind of assess if, if some of these areas are affecting their ability to stay well, um, and do well inside and outside of the classroom. A lot of the students that. Join are, are not necessarily joining for their academics or the rigor of the coursework, uh, that, that they're kind of [00:29:00] experiencing at BU and elsewhere.

But, but rather they're joining because they're lonely and they feel disconnected and they're looking for resources and connection on campus. And because of that, that's kind of affecting their emotional health. And then, you know, their experience within the classroom too. Um, majority of the students that are joining are, are joining just due to feeling isolated.

And I think that's a, a great component of the peer coach where they can come in as a peer and maybe kind of felt something similar, especially when they were a first or second year student and still getting acquainted with the program, uh, with the university. And then, you know, the, the job of the peer coaches is not to be an expert on everything either.

But rather to kind of be an expert about what's available in terms of resources. So, so coaches will use those active listening skills, responding skills, and then help students get connected to the experts on [00:30:00] campus and be knowledgeable of that. So that was a long way to say there, there is no ideal student that we're, we're looking for, but rather, um, it's about listening to them and learning what they're looking for and, you know, learning some of their, what their experiences have been on campus and then.

If it feels like it's a good fit to work with a peer coach, we get them connected.

Gillian: Yeah. Loneliness is such a common experience these days, and it's interesting. There's so many people around on a college campus, yet so many of the students still feel so lonely and isolated. It is definitely a struggle.

So a program like this, it, it's really great to have that 'cause isolation and loneliness is, is not good or fun at all.

Paul: Yeah, I, we, we hear that all the time. Um, and I think it's helpful to have the, [00:31:00] the peer coach perspective on that. That as much as, you know, a, a parent or a clinician might say, you'll find your people, your meet your people.

Um, but it, I think it can be helpful just to have the student perspective on that as well, to listen and empathize and maybe share a similar experience and then come up with some ideas. You know, coaching is all about doing, so it's not that the peer coach just says you know, you should check out this club, but, um, let's research that.

Let's see when they meet, let's go together. So it's all about taking action and doing it as opposed to just kind of talking back and forth or suggesting it too, which really helps with the supportive accountability and getting connected and kind of being able to, you know, empathically push the student to maybe get outside of their comfort zone a little bit and make some of those connections that they might not have done on their own.

Mei: I'm just thinking like even [00:32:00] I, I feel like with my experience when I was in school, I felt like I, to your point, Gillian, I was always with people. I went to lectures filled with 50 plus students and I had friends and I had a roommate, what have you. But despite that, I still felt really lonely and I think it.

It was, it wasn't necessarily about quantity, it was more about quality and finding the right people that I could be myself around. And it's not easy. Like you can be doing all the right things and still like. Still struggle, um, with your social circles. So I can definitely see how a coach being there with you sort of like holding your hand and going to a club you might be interested in with you would be so helpful.

And, um, and giving you that push to, to find your people.[00:33:00]

Gillian: I know just in my everyday life, if there's something new I wanna do, but I'm a little nervous, I'll see if I can bring her along someone that I'm close with, they'll be like, Hey, will you come with me to this? I really wanna go but a little nervous to go alone. And you know, I have a few friends that also can relate to that and so they always try to help if they can.

And it's, um, been a positive experience whenever I do that. And eventually I end up just doing it on my own and not thinking twice about it.

Paul: And you're far more likely to do it right if you have someone else. But the, the piece of kind of building up your own skills and confidence and belief in yourself and then doing it on your own is, is kind of the goal of coaching too.

You do it together a couple of times. A few times and then, you know, allow the student to. Ask someone else to go with them, ask a, a peer or someone that they've met there and that kind of allows them to kind of build, build on that skill as well [00:34:00] as their own confidence too.

Mei: Yeah, that definitely makes a ton of sense.

Gillian: So do you have any student or coach success stories that you'd like to share or can share with us?

Paul: Yeah, I mean, from the, from the coach side, you know, I, I've, I've shared a little bit about kind of coaches' experience, but I mean, just kind of paraphrasing what. Coaches have kind of written to me at the end of the year or even years later, just about the unique experience that they had with Pass.

And then being a peer coach. I think it's a great opportunity whether you're interested in kind of going into counseling or human services or anything like that or elsewhere. To really have a unique job as a, as a young adult, that I think can be hard to find, especially on campus, to be able to work one-on-one, uh, with a same age peer or similar age peer.

But to be able to probably [00:35:00] build the, like meaningful connections, I think and recognize that. Coaches are making a difference really kind of has, allows the coach to build up their own confidence and beliefs just as they're trying to do with the student. But I think that's reciprocated in their own experience and, and being in this role.

And then many of them use that experience again to help them kind of go on to graduate school or working within the field. They're just using those transferable skills to kind of work within any. Field or industry too. I mean, being able to listen and respond and empathize and connect is, are such important skills I think no matter what, you know, you're doing within your career field.

But many coaches wrote back that, you know, it was one of the more meaningful experiences or if not the most meaningful experience that they had, you know, at Boston University in their, their four years or so too. Um, to be able to have that. Kind of unique job opportunity. And, and from [00:36:00] the student side, you know, I, I would kind of hear oftentimes at the end of, of the year, just the type of impact that their coach had on them.

Uh, what it meant for them, you know, academically and socially, but you know, emotionally too, just to be able to build up confidence and skills in a lot of different areas. And I always share with coaches that. Don't always, students don't always share, you know, the impact that that you're making on them throughout the academic year and while you're actually kind of in the moment.

And that's just good to kind of remember that you never quite know the impact that you are making. So even if it's not said, you know, verbally or you can't see it, just know that students are feeling that and then, you know, they always wait till the end to share it. But I always just tried and kind of made sure that those words were passed along to the coaches to.

Just to remember that the kind of lasting impact that they had and that students can kind [00:37:00] of use that, that experience to continue to, to build and grow as, as a student and, and as a person and as a, you know, a member of the, you know, BU community and beyond. Yeah.

Gillian: The program makes such a difference. It's amazing.

Like, I know someone that was almost finished with college. Um, and had to stop one and a half classes left due to just mental health conditions. Health issues. Um, and I know that she would really benefit from a program like this if, you know she had had that opportunity. So it's just so great to hear about this and the people that it's helping.

Mei: Yeah, I mean, I, I am with that person. I literally went to BU and it, this program was right under my nose the whole time I was there, and I think [00:38:00] it would've been so, so helpful for me, especially like given, um the hard time I had socially and um, at the time, like I didn't know I had ADHD I got diagnosed like after I graduated, and so even.

I wouldn't have known either way if I had a DHD or not if I had participated, but I think having the accountability factor, someone to help me organize tasks and go to for that sort of academic support would've been game changing. And I can just think about my GPA and the difference it would've made, but.

Yeah, I, I wish I would have known that this existed, uh, during my time at BU.

Paul: Well our, you know, our goal is to continue to grow the program. I mean, not just at BU but at [00:39:00] other, you know, universities as well. Again, we, we expanded to UMass Boston and, and Rowan University in New Jersey a couple of years ago, and, and the goal is to continue to do that. We've gotten to a point with the program where we have some of our initial data that I mentioned is really encouraging and we'll continue to evaluate that.

Um, but, but this is an evidence-based program that has a lot of capability to support students, um, far beyond, you know, the, the campus of Boston University. And that's our goal. You know, one of my main goals this summer and kind of moving into the next academic year is to build partnerships and connections with other colleges and universities that might benefit from a program.

Um, that's really kind of already. Well built out, you know, I, I probably should have mentioned earlier, but, um, we, we kind of built this very structured program where if you're a peer coach, you get a peer coach manual that shows you exactly how to be a peer coach. If you're a supervisor of the program, [00:40:00] you get a supervisor manual that shows you exactly how to supervise, um, peer coaches, um, and really kind of, kind of maintain the fidelity of, of the research.

Um, the intervention that we built and we've built out an implementation guide too, where. If you're looking to implement this program at your college or university, we've built out a guide that kind of shows you exactly what you'll need to do that. Um, and, and again, my goal is to build these connections, um, with as many schools or universities that, that might benefit from this program really kinda over the course of the next several months too.

Um, and help other schools adapt this program and support students at their college or university as well.

Mei: Yeah, that's definitely helpful information to know. Um, and then also for anyone who's listening, like students, alumni, faculty, administrators, um, how can they learn more about the [00:41:00] program and potentially bring it to their university or college?

Paul: It would really just be reaching out to me and, and having a conversation, allowing me to learn more about their school or program, kind of what they're looking to do. I can better outline the program, answer any questions that they

might have. Uh, the probably best way to get in contact with me is. Uh, my email, which is just my last name, Cherchia@bu.edu, uh, you can probably see my last name spelled there on the screen as well.

Um, but, but that's what it would be. It's reaching out to me as the point person for the program and having a conversation and, uh, really kind of seeing if it makes sense. And if, if PASS, um, is able to support, you know, their student body, then we're more than willing to. Connect and, you know, help them implement that program, um, and have a strong implementation, you know, at, at their school.

Gillian: Awesome. And we can drop your contact information below too, [00:42:00] so,

Mei: great. Yeah, is there any final thing you'd wanna share, Paul, about PASS?

Paul: Um, you know, all I would say that is if you're considering it or if it feels like you've been looking for kind of a, a peer coaching program, um, that's well built out and we have kind of evidence behind it just to reach out and at least have the initial conversation with myself.

I can answer kind of any questions or concerns that anyone might have, and we can see if there, there's kind of room for collaboration and a partnership. And, um, thank you Mei and Gillian for inviting me on. This is my first podcast ever. So, um, I, I'm thrilled to be a guest and hopefully, um, people can hear this and we can continue to support, um, young adults through our, our past kind of peer coaching model.

Mei: Well, you did [00:43:00] fantastic and thank you so much for coming on the show today, um, and kind of walking us through PASS and the benefits and the why and how others can bring it to their, uh, institutions.

Paul: Great. Thank you both.

Mei: Thank you.

Gillian: If you'd like to contact us, you can email us at staytuned@umassmed.edu and check out the Transitions ACR website at UMassmed.edu/transitionsacr, thanks for being here and be sure to stay tuned for next time.