3

Program Development

The 2021-22 evaluation focused in large part on informing the development of programming.

a Institution-Level Program Feedback
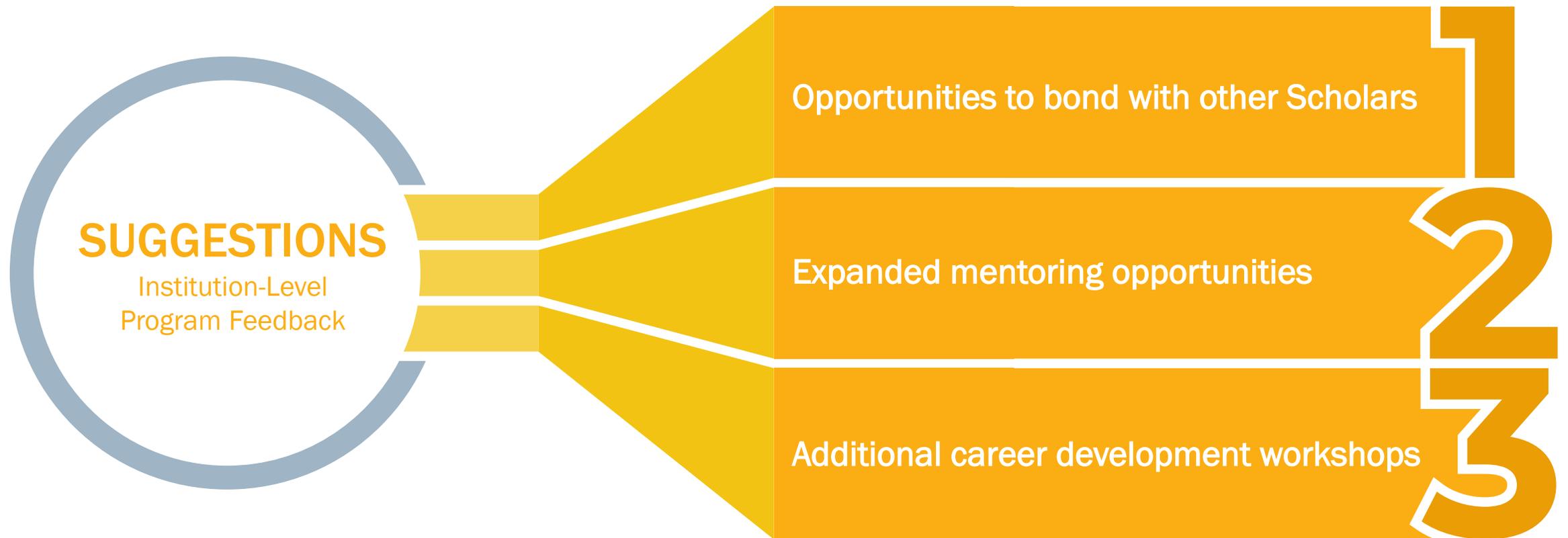
b Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

KESSLER SCHOLARS COLLABORATIVE

M | CEDER

Institution-Level Program Feedback

The CEDER team worked closely with the six partner institutions throughout the 2021-22 academic year to ensure that evaluation findings are responsive, useful, and directly inform programming. Our program development reporting has included data interpretation meetings and institution-level case studies and analytic memos. In this report, we provide some examples of institution-level feedback that was more consistent between participating sites. Many of these findings are drawn from analysis of student focus group data, open-ended survey responses, and interviews with staff leads at each institution.

SUGGESTIONS
Institution-Level Program Feedback

1 Opportunities to bond with other Scholars

2 Expanded mentoring opportunities

3 Additional career development workshops

Institution-Level Program Feedback

① Opportunities to Bond with Other Scholars

Students at several institutions expressed a desire for more social events or other opportunities to build community with other Kessler Scholars.

- **Social events:** Suggestions focused on more informal social events, such as movie nights or dinners. One Scholar described being interested in *"more events without an itinerary."* Another Scholar suggested that student advisory boards could plan and lead some of these gatherings.

- **Cohort-specific activities:** Many Scholars wanted more opportunities to connect to their cohort, such as through cohort dinners.

- **Interactive or small group activities:** Some Scholars described wanting more opportunities to interact with their peers during Kessler Scholars events or the freshmen seminar class. One student suggested small group activities as a way to connect more deeply with other Scholars.

> " I think it would kind of be nice if they would do more either interactive things during the seminar, or if they have **more events that are catered towards just your cohort**, so you can get to know each other and actually form this connection with this community.

> " The one change I would make would be having more options for community service opportunities and **more scheduled get to togethers** with all cohorts.

> " The one change I would make is **more in-person events** where we could all come together as a community.

Institution-Level Program Feedback

② Expanded Mentoring Programming

Students valued the peer mentoring program for first-years and provided ideas for expanded mentoring opportunities. These ideas included

- **Alumni mentorship** for career and professional development;

- **Upper-year mentors** to mentor students serving as peer mentors for first-years;

- **Financial support** for mentor-mentee activities; and

- **A structure to support** first-year students who experience challenges with their peer mentor (e.g., difficulty contacting a mentor).

> " I am a peer mentor, and I have freshman mentees. But I still sometimes want somebody, like a junior, as my mentor. So, it's like the cycle repeats...you teach the other person what they need to know for the next year.

> " After like a handful of meetings, [my peer mentor] just stopped reaching out...And I wasn't really sure who I should have gone to in that situation. And it was not a great feeling to see other people around me have great relationships with peer mentors that I was lacking.

Institution-Level Program Feedback

③ Additional Career Development Workshops

Across institutions, Scholars described how valuable their experience at program events and workshops had been. Scholars shared ideas for other workshop topics, especially on career development topics. Ideas included

- Workshops targeted towards specific **post-college pathways**, such as graduate programs or service programs like Peace Corps;

- **Financial literacy** workshops;

- **Job interview** preparation; and

- **Networking** opportunities, especially with alumni.

Students also suggested that there could be more opportunities for **interactive components** in institution-level and Collaborative-wide workshops and events.

Some suggested creating new **peer-support opportunities** to put career development skills into practice, such as reviewing each others' resumes.

Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

CEDER gathered recommendations for the development of Collaborative-wide programming during qualitative data collection activities. These included individual interviews with lead staff at each participating institution, focus groups with students at each institution, and open-response questions in the spring 2022 survey. Here we present our synthesis of feedback from Scholars and institution staff to inform the development of the Collaborative.

SUGGESTIONS
Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

1 Kessler Scholar Feedback

2 Institution Staff Feedback
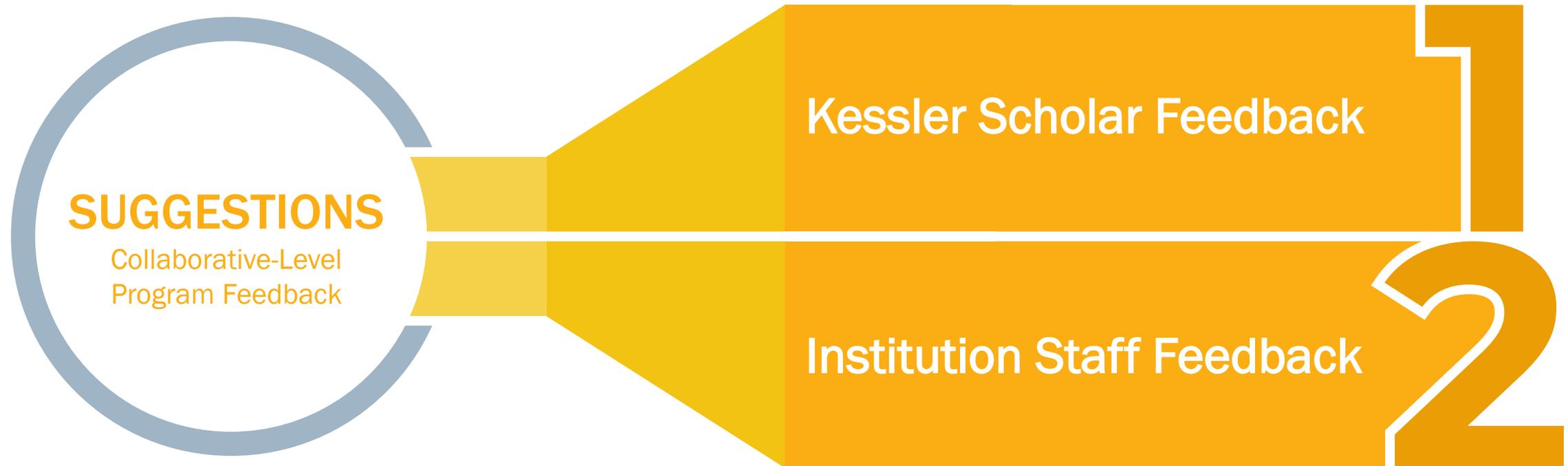
Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

① Kessler Scholar Feedback

Feedback from Scholars focused largely on ideas and practical considerations for events with Scholars from other institutions.

Perceived Benefits for Scholars

Across all six institutions and all cohort years, Kessler Scholars expressed interest in connecting with Scholars at other colleges and universities within the Kessler Collaborative.

The most commonly perceived benefits of cross-Collaborative engagement were

- Building a social and professional **network**,

- Meeting students with **similar backgrounds** or shared **career interests**, and

- Sharing experiences, **giving and receiving advice** with other Scholars.

Suggestions for Events

Scholars at all institutions brainstormed ideas for possible cross-Collaborative events, as well as other opportunities for the Collaborative to engage and support Kessler Scholars. Student suggestions included

- Kessler Scholars **retreat or conference**,

- Social or **networking** events,

- Virtual events with opportunities to **connect with other Scholars**, such as in small-group breakout rooms, and

- **Funding opportunities** for graduate school test preparation or unpaid internship experiences.

Considerations for Events

The students shared the following considerations about making cross-site engagement opportunities meaningful and accessible.

- **In-person events**: Scholars showed more enthusiasm around in-person engagement opportunities.

- **Affordability**: Scholars discussed the importance of events being affordable or financially supported by the program.

- **Timing**: Scholars discussed avoiding scheduling events around midterms or finals, suggesting spring or summer as times for in-person opportunities.

Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

② Institution Staff Feedback

The CEDER team gathered data from the lead staff member at each institution to inform recommendations for the development of Collaborative programming.

Staff Experience

All institution staff were positive about their experiences in the Kessler Scholars Collaborative. Site leads expressed the Collaborative provided a **supportive learning community**.

They described how the Collaborative offered a valuable space for staff to seek **advice**, form **strategic alliances**, gain **moral support**, and share with **near-peers** at other institutions.

Staff leads at each site recognized the differences between institutions (as related to resources, staffing structure, student identities) but generally did not feel like that prevented the learning that stems from the Collaborative.

Collaborative-Level Program Feedback

> " I think having different perspectives, but all like-minded interest is so helpful because it helps us **elevate each other** within the Collaborative response.
>
> **-INSTITUTION STAFF MEMBER**

INSTITUTION STAFF FEEDBACK, CONT.

When thinking about the future of the Collaborative, institution staff offered the following suggestions.

Onboarding new site leads: Given staff transitions and the addition of new sites, some mentioned the need to consider how new site leads are onboarded to the Collaborative, in particular thinking about how to share past knowledge.

Preserving informal, organic interactions: A majority of site leads expressed appreciation for informal knowledge sharing between sites. Some staff suggested ways to continue this learning as the Collaborative continues to grow. A few ideas included smaller regional meetings or subcommittees based on particular program components, like peer mentoring.

Future opportunities for students: All site leads described excitement around opportunities for students to engage in the wider Collaborative community. These ideas included:

- Opportunities for students to meet students from other Kessler sites, such as a summer convening, a Collaborative student advisory board, or a research symposium;
- Opportunities for students to meet staff from other Kessler sites; and
- Connecting students to other institutions for graduate school or job and internship opportunities.

Future opportunities for staff: Some sight leads shared ideas about opportunities for site leads, such as connecting staff to National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) memberships or creating space for staff to share their approach and work.