

**18<sup>th</sup> International Conference on The First-Year Experience**  
**Southampton, England**  
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**FYE Program - An Integrated Programme for the Intervention and Retention of First Year Students**

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This session examines the strategy, processes and findings of implementing an Intervention and Retention programme for First Year Students at University.

The session commences with research and reasoning that indicated a need to develop a strategy that responded to converting “at-risk” students to “successful” students. The research includes findings from within our own University and international institutions. The justification presented to senior University management to develop and deliver the Intervention and Retention programme is examined.

The overview of the strategy is explored and includes how at-risk criteria were developed in accordance to a first year student’s enrolment cycle. Also included in the strategy overview is the model of how the student is contacted, how we connect to specialist support services and how records are maintained in the University’s student management system.

The session then describes, in detail, the processes that are involved in the delivery of an integrated Intervention and Monitoring programme. We explore the unique model of “students helping students”, their recruitment, training and monitoring as First Year Experience Assistants. Examination of the University’s student mentoring programme and it’s contribution to the Intervention and Monitoring strategy will occur. Relationship management with Faculty will be described and how an effective partnership model was adopted.

The University’s student management system responsible for the identification, monitoring and contact management of at-risk students is presented with an outline of the functionality that contributes to the success of this strategy.

The session will continue to explore how the adoption of an intervention and monitoring programme shaped the customer service delivery model in one Faculty. A fully integrated approach to student service has been developed and implemented to provide students with a seamless service. This has allowed staff dedicated to student administration to focus on efficient and effective systems whilst the customer focused staff can concentrate on the provision of excellent service. A model will be presented outlining the functions and activities of a Faculty Undergraduate Office, Student Information Centre and the First Year Experience team.

To conclude, results from the strategy will be presented. The data will include both qualitative and quantitative results. Comments from both students and faculty staff will be presented. Initial findings from the University's first Expectations vs Experience survey will also be included. The inclusion of the Faculties perspective on the programme will be provided. The "value-add" component of the programme will be examined from both the University and student perspective.

During the presentation we will be encouraging active discussion.

## **Freshman Connections--Eight Years Later: Meeting the Challenges of Success**

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Since Freshman Connections (FC) began in 1997, disqualification, probation, retention, and graduation rates of new students have dramatically improved (e.g., second-year retention rate alone has risen from 68.3% to 78.3 %, peaking at 80.1%). After summarizing data tracing results to FC, we will provide handouts that describe the program with its ten living-learning communities meant for all 3500 first-year students. However, this presentation will focus on the "challenges" that arise from success and how FC is attempting to meet those challenges. For example, what happens when the local press becomes interested in the program, publishes extensively but selectively about it, and causes administrators, donors, alumni, and legislators to question accepted principles and processes? What happens when University Core Curriculum goals, on which FC is based, begin to be revised? Does FC play a direct role in that revision, or is FC forced to the sidelines because it contains no dedicated courses, only "borrowing" from departments that become territorial during any revision cycle? More generally, what is the best way to refine the goals of such a diverse, interdisciplinary, interdepartmental program? Other issues include: given that the Common Reader program serves a specific purpose within FC, should others on campus be able to choose titles that serve their ideological purposes; given FC's permanent status on campus, how does a program best prepare new faculty for roles in the program; conversely, how can a program assist faculty who do commit their time and energy to the program with the Promotion and Tenure process; at what point

does overall programming detract from empowering individual learning teams to plan their own events; what is the best way to utilize student mentors in the program? Though presenters will share thoughts and current plans, they are also equally interested in participants' ideas for meeting these challenges.

## **Focus On Student Success: Merits of Curriculum Modification In Meeting the Needs of Today's Students**

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### Introduction

Underscoring all contributing factors influencing retention is the need to identify the profiles of first year students today. While identified standards, programming, and expected outcomes are needed for FYE Seminar credibility, course modifications with respect to diverse population enrollments have merit in accommodating the different learning profiles and career directions of first year students.

### Presentation

Bemidji State University, Bemidji, Minnesota, USA, is a 4 year public university with an FYE program in which all (approximately 650) first-time, full-time students enroll. Course topics have been created to reflect expectations of changing new-student audiences. The institution has established 24 diverse and separate FYE sections offered during Fall Semester including Seminars for students in: Honors: TRIO (low income, first generation, and disabled eligible); First Year Residential Experience FYRE (FYE with a residential component); Music; and General sections. International students self-select FYE sections of their choice. Two General and one TRIO course are offered during Spring Semester.

Syllabi accommodate the curricular and co-curricular profiles of different cohort groups. Academic freedom in interpreting and modifying syllabi prevails in all Seminars and most significantly in

FYE sections that have a specific topic focus.

While topics, delivery, and learning activities vary dependent on cohort interest, there are course components that help support congruity relevant to expectations and goals among all FYE sections. Each Seminar utilizes a common textbook the purpose and content of which has been developed,

revised, and modified by FYE faculty. Classes are created on a common syllabus identifying agreed upon measurable outcomes. Common, supplemental special interest presentations enhance and are relevant to all FYE sections.

Assessment of FYE Seminars at Bemidji State University is valued and influential in determining course continuation and future program initiatives. The evaluation instrument, a standard used for all courses at BSU, allows for the inclusion of four additional faculty-created evaluation questions. This feature accommodates FYE curriculum diversity and the University's need to assess student satisfaction with different courses.

### Goals and Benefits to Session Participants

The session will discuss the foundations upon which different FYE sections were created, University supported, progress experienced to date, and student & faculty evaluation of course expectations, experiences and successes. Additional topics addressed include: merits of a faculty created FYE text, success of those efforts, and lessons learned ; methods and administrative mandates associated with the coordination and establishment of the common syllabi ; Perspectives on required FYE course benefits versus non-mandatory; and influence of FYE Evaluation Instrument to FYE's future. Professionals seeking to establish and maintain FYE programs reflective of today's student audiences will benefit from presenters' topic discussions, group contributions, perspectives, and materials provided.

### **Defining a Collective Role of Learning Communities on Campus: A Response to Program Review**

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Learning communities have had a presence on the Bowling Green State University campus since the late 1990s. Currently, there are eight residential learning communities with plans for the creation of more. Their flourishing numbers have raised the question of what should be the collective role of learning communities within the institution. It is hoped that this question will be at least partially addressed by the collective learning communities program review that is just concluding this 2004-2005 academic year. Additional questions for which it is anticipated that the program review will address include a). How many learning communities is enough for the institution, b). What should be the balance or mix with respect to themes/focus of the communities, c). Do learning communities provide some benefit or value i.e. are they effective with students, and d). What are some recommendations on good indications of assessment—effective means of assessment, indicators of success and which indicators should be examined? This session will examine the reported findings of the program review and its resulting outcomes.

## **How to Develop an Ideal, and Comprehensive First Year Experience Course or Seminar: A Round Table Discussion Approach**

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Each time I go to First Year Experience conferences, I always try to make it a point to talk to attendees from other institutions, in an effort to find out the different FYE core content of their courses or seminars. I even continue to correspond with some of them, via e-mail, to continue our dialogue. My cursory finding concerning this issue is that course content used on different campuses vary quite markedly, and yet there also seem to be some similarities among them. Over the past few years I have gleaned what I think are critical issues that are worth exploring and discussing in a round table fashion, at one of the international conference. To facilitate this discussion process, I have decided to present these issues in the form of questions, which are stated below:

1. Considering all the ramifications of academic freedom, as it is defined in higher education, today, what elements or component would constitute the goals or objectives of an ideal, typical, or comprehensive First Year Experience course or seminar?
2. What is the role of the university or college administration, in dealing with controversial issues such as freedom of speech, gay/lesbian student organizations, admissions and retention policies, judicial and due process policies?
3. How can the institutional community--students, staff, and administration be effectively utilized, to enhance First Year Experience classes or seminars?
4. How can community-at-large organizations such as Rotary, Kiwani, Lions International service clubs, or religious-based organizations be utilized to enrich FYE classes or seminars?
5. How can local businesses be used by institutions of higher education to enhance FYE educational experiences?
6. In what way can FYE instructors use community resources to encourage students to widen the scope of their cultural diversity experiences, and to increase awareness for research agendas?

The above mentioned questions will be discussed in a roundtable forum fashion, where there will be an exchange of ideas with attendees from other institutions of higher education.

### **The Development and Implementation of Ideal, Powerful, and Comprehensive First-Year Seminars: A Case for Bradley University**

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This poster session will showcase, in a schematic way, the programmatic approach that Bradley University uses for its First-Year Experience seminars or courses. This poster is quite similar to the one I presented at the 17th International FYE Conference in Maui, Hawaii, July 14-17, 2004. This poster presentation was very well received, as indicated in the attendees' ratings and comments, that I thought it would be a good idea to present it again this year. The poster will include, among other things, the course description, the unique seminar goals, course or seminar outcome measurement procedures, required seminar lecture and event expectations, suggested course topics, student community involvement expectations, as well as research study activities. A common core of course topics such as appreciation for cultural diversity, campus rape, career development strategies, substance abuse, current educational issues, volunteerism, community service and academic progress will be covered. How these different components are used to produce an ideal environment in which new students are helped to adjust to their new educational institution will be the focus of this poster session.

Systematic planning of courses or seminars is very critical in course offerings, especially for new students. The objectives, the contents, assessment procedures, or student expectations have to be all clearly laid out if the course is to be meaningful to students. This is especially true of institutions such as ours that offer multiple sections of FYE courses. In our case we do have at least 40 sections every year. Because of this, I strongly believe that it is always very beneficial to students and all other people involved in the teaching of the course to have a visual conceptual framework of the "nuts and bolts" of the course. One of the ways to communicate the framework is to develop a "flow-chart" or poster, which can be displayed in certain buildings on campus, to constantly remind everyone that this is a very important part of university life. This poster presentation is designed to share with other institutions, what we at Bradley University do.

### **The First Year College Experience for Students with Psychological Disabilities- Concerns and Issues-How College Professionals Can Help**

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The results of three studies (2 survey format and one qualitative interview study ) conducted by the presenters examining the concerns and issues of students with emotional disabilities, will guide our discussion of the issues and concerns associated with advising and teaching first year students with emotional disabilities

1. Presenters will briefly discuss the demographics of college students with emotional disabilities, as well as research on reasons that students with psychological disabilities are enrolling in our colleges and dropping out of college at a higher rate than their peers with other disabilities (Becker, Martin, Wajeih, Ward and Shern, 2002).
2. The issues and concerns these students face and how the university advisor and faculty member may be impacted will be presented based on research, surveys, interviews, and current case law.
3. Presenters will show the results of their research and how this data can guide practice when working with students with emotional disabilities. As time allows, the presenters will also show video clips of college students with emotional disabilities discussing issues they face in attending college and working with university professionals. Suggestions for accommodating these students in advisement and the classroom, how to recognize a student who may have psychological concerns, and how to approach the student will be covered. Ideas of networking with other campus agencies will be presented. Audience participation will be strongly encouraged.

### **The Importance of Establishing a Symbiotic Relationship between First-Year Programs and Institutional Research**

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Funding for first-year programs, at many universities, is based largely on the ability of the program to demonstrate increased retention and success for students involved with the program. Utilizing campus systems already in place, much of this information is readily available.

This session will focus on recognizing the collaborations necessary to access data and statistics; how to create an internal tracking system whether or not campus wide systems are already in place; and how to interpret the data in a meaningful way to assist in securing future funding. The importance of establishing a set of measurable goals and objectives in all areas of programming will be addressed.

Freshman Programs at California State University, Fullerton, like many first year programs, has an 8 year history of increasing retention, graduation rates and GPAs among participating students when compared to the non-Freshman Programs CSUF population of first time freshmen. A

common misconception among administrators and others is that these results are due to the self-selection of students, the idea that through self-selection students applying for Freshman Programs are entering the university with higher indicators of success: high school G.P.A., SAT/ACT scores, and remedial status. Data from Institutional Research and Analytical Studies revealed that the reverse was true: students self-selecting into Freshman Programs ranked lower on all indicators of success than the non-Freshman Programs CSUF first time freshman population. This data is important to reveal to administration and others for funding and strategic planning purposes.

### **Shared Responsibility: Statistical Findings on First-Year Seminar Instructor Impact on the First Year Experience**

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We know from the literature that the first semester of a student's time in college is critical in predicting whether or not a student will remain at a university. How many of the indicators of college success and the retention of a student are due to their interaction with specific instructors?

Little research has been done to demonstrate the difference in GPA, retention, and persistence within a first year program as a function of instructor. The study conducted analyzed the impact on each of these factors of first-year seminar instructors. Our study found there were statistically significant differences among these indicators of success based on instructor.

This presentation will focus on the key differences between the instructors that now have the most successful students and those that don't. Encouragement and admonition for those teaching first-year seminars as well as insight for those that hire and develop faculty to teach these courses will be provided. Future directions based on the findings of this study will be discussed.

### **Community College Bridging the Educational Gap**

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This presentation will focus on how out of a concern for student retention, several programs were initiated by the Student Affairs Department and Services. There was a need to shift from a philosophy that students had the right to failed. Therefore, the new philosophy supported the idea that the institution had an obligation to help students succeed. One of the campus' barriers that needed to be overcome was the distance between faculty and student services. With the implementation of Supplemental Instruction (SI), this was one of the first instances where faculty and counselors worked together to help students succeed. SI workshops focused on "at risk" classes where faculty met with students one hour per week to review course content. Over the last 12 years, our research has validated that SI students earned from a grade to grade and a half when they participate in the SI. SI students did better than non-SI participant taking the same class and instructor. The EOPS Summer Bridge Program/Learning Communities provided an opportunity for entering low-income freshmen students to participate in an English and Counseling-Guidance Learning Community. In this learning communities both the English and Counseling instructors co-teach and they stay in the classroom together. This model allows for the instructors to integrate their curriculum and provide role modeling for their students. Through this experience students earned college credit for completing both courses, earned federal work-study jobs, participated in Summer Mathematics Enhancement Program, and were given an extensive orientation about college life and expectations. At the completion of Summer Bridge Program, students were enrolled into fall classes and programs that included Achievement in Mathematics (AIM) and Supplemental Instruction (SI). The EOPS Summer Bridge has been around for 32 years, we recently completed reviewing statistical data supporting the retention and success rate for the last 4 years. Finally, the Achievement in Mathematics data showed that students in this program had a higher success rate than the department average. Therefore, we know our programs work and we are happy to share with participants the logistics and components that make these programs successful.

### **Peer Mentor/Educator**

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The Leadership Academy was established as a retention strategy and a vehicle for responding to the University's commitment to train students for leadership. The Academy allows students to become trained paraprofessionals in a broad spectrum of subject matters through academic and out-of-the-classroom certification programs. In the Conflict Resolution Center of Excellence; students receive training in conflict resolution/peer mediation and topics as:

Mediation Structure Training

Co-Mediation

Cross-Cultural Mediation

Train the Trainer

The peer mediation concept at Cheyney operates on the premise that students will seek out or consult their peers when they experience issues or need support dealing with campus concerns. In this context, students are specifically trained to work with other students in the areas of Peer Mediation for conflict resolution including

Mediation Education and Anger Management

Becoming Speakers

Becoming Researachers

Producing Conflict Resolution Models

The Leadership Academy invites freshmen to participate in the Conflict Resolution Center of Excellence Peer Mediation training program while they are enrolled in the Freshman Orientation course. The course provides an opportunity for students to complete two weeks of conflict resolution learning experiences that are developed to enhance critical thinking skills. These students become a "cluster" for researching retention trends and will participate in the Leadership Academy where they are trained as Peer Conflict Resolution Educators and develop skills necessary for mediating disputes involving fellow students. Some of these skills include researching, making presentations and power writing.

The presentation format for this peer mentor/educator initiative calls for four (4) students to serve as co-presenters to conduct dramatizations via simulations, become a panel, and present oral and visual materials. The audience may glean first hand information for the students regarding all aspects of the Leadership Academy Conflict Resolution Center of Excellence Peer Educator program at Cheyney University.

**Widening Participation; The implications for Nursing Vocational Education and Training**

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The presenter intends to show the findings from an investigation of whether the current support mechanisms for students are meeting the needs of this 'new' type of student and identify the implications for future development of student support services (Asbee & Ormond 1998, Ayers & Smith 1998, Billing 1997, Bodycott 1997, Earwaker 1992, Fazey & Linford 1996, King 1995).

In conducting this preliminary investigation there was an opportunity to explore one aspect of this issue in preparation for a wider study for the thesis component of the EdD programme. For this investigation the writer analysed some pre-existing data which may provide some insight into why some students choose to leave the course without completing their programmes of study (Minter 2001, Kinsella et al 1999, Christie et al 2004, Peelo & Wareham 2002, Tinto 1975, Tait 2004, Yorke 2000, Yorke & Longden 2004). The presentation will explore this material, present the results of the study and identify the way ahead for further research in this area.

### **The Campus is a Village. Voices of Learning Communities**

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The presentation will first briefly summarize the findings of the quantitative study on LC in relation to student persistence and GPA. It will follow with a brief summary of the literature on LC strengths and weaknesses as well as a summary of the study's participants and methods. The presentation will then elucidate the major findings about the effectiveness of this particular LC as well as the challenges it confronted in the running and institutionalizing of it. The remainder of the presentation will allow time to answer questions about the study.

### **DePaul University's Chicago Quarter Program: Successes and Challenges Ten Year Later**

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This session will focus on DePaul's innovative Chicago Quarter (CQ) Program. In their first quarter, all entering students take one of two Chicago-themed style classes, with such titles as Chicago's Future Markets and Chicago's Music Scene. One-third enroll in the more experiential and smaller (22 students) Discover Chicago (DC) style courses, which begin a week before regular classes do. An academic instructor, a staff professional, and a student leader take students for five days straight on various excursions throughout the City. Remaining students enroll in Explore Chicago (EC) courses, which start when other classes do. These are capped at 30, and take fewer excursions, although some experiential learning is required. While both types include team teaching methods and co-curricular programming, Explore students report feeling less satisfied with their freshmen experience than do Discover students.

The CQ Program was instituted ten years ago in part because of growing concerns over decreasing retention among our first year students. Since its inception, retention rates have steadily risen for all first year students, but especially for those who take DC classes. Unfortunately, the DC program is costly for the institution to maintain and includes a huge time commitment from both faculty and staff professionals. The result is there are never enough DC classes to accommodate the demand. Recent focus groups confirm that many EC students feel like second class citizens in comparison to DC students. One of the challenges of the enormous popularity of DePaul's DC Program is to maintain its success while strengthening our other offerings. Various proposals are now being considered to help create an intellectually exciting and emotionally bonding experience for all entering students.

### **Customer Service: An Essential Variable in Retention**

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We will discuss why service is critical to improving freshman retention. Service areas that impact retention for the purpose of this presentation are : Admissions, Academic Records, Registration, Academic Advising, Retention Programs, Student Business Services, and Student Financial Aid.

Participants will receive data on a six year study of service in the above departments. They will be given specific information about what was done in each of these areas to improve student retention, and they will see the outcomes.

The participants will be given the instrument which was developed by PhD researchers at Eastern Michigan University. They will learn how to assess service problems and what to do. They will see how the "College and University Student Satisfaction with Administrative Services" instrument was administered. They will see the literature review, the factor analysis and the 8 sub scales identified for service and retention. They will view graphs from each area as well as the University.

Understanding and meeting the expectations of new students is important to the University's competitiveness: don't sell what you can't deliver. This is the ATM generation how can we use imaging, automated e-mail responses, web portals and on line status to ease customer complaints. Lastly I will reinforce the importance of service, demonstrate how to establish a baseline for service and demonstrate the method of comparing services in various departments and identifying problem areas. EMU first year retention rates increased from 74% to 81% and generated almost \$2,000,000 more in revenue.

## **Can First Year Seminars Impact Critical Thinking?**

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In 1993, Elon University developed a required first year seminar designed to significantly increase the academic challenge of the first year, while fostering critical thinking goals in our students. This course, The Global Experience, uses William Perry's developmental scheme for ethical and intellectual development to measure the cognitive development of traditional age college students as they traverse the first year. The objective of the curriculum revision was to foster complex thinking development in our students. Has it worked?

On the surface, yes. Students report that the course challenges their thinking abilities, while exposing them to new ways of seeing the world and making meaning in that world. But do we have hard evidence that these changes are occurring?

In this presentation, I will begin by providing the intellectual development scheme we have used at Elon to shape our curriculum development and assessment of learning. Then I will share the description and outline of the required seminar, The Global Experience. In this way, the audience will have a sense of how we have interpreted Perry's ideas, and manifested them in the curriculum.

Then I will share the pre- and post-tests, so that the audience can see how the assessment data was gathered. Finally, I will share student samples from the assessments, demonstrating the impact on complex thinking this seminar has had at Elon.

In brief, Elon students typically enter at the dualistic thinking level described by Perry. Evidence of this thinking will be presented. Over the course of the seminar, students can be prodded not only to Perry's multiplicity level, but to the more complex level of relativism, where students begin to understand that there are "better" and "worse" ways of thinking and acting. By looking at evidence of this thinking, the audience can see how first year students can be challenged to think and act in much more complex ways, making their entire university experience a more rewarding one.

**Hello Mr. (and Mrs.) Chips: Connecting Senior Faculty with Freshmen**

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Exposure of Freshmen to senior faculty often increases student likelihood to succeed in their first year and to persist in college. Members of the proposed panel have worked extensively with Freshmen throughout most of their careers in such courses as Introduction to Biology, Composition 1, Styles & Ways of Learning, Public Speaking, among other classes. Each panelist has noted a significant difference in student performance at the Junior and Senior level if students were taught by senior faculty in their Freshman year.

Using a combination of personal experience, analysis of retention data, examination of course evaluations, and individual student interviews, we will present an argument for the power of exposing first year students to senior faculty. Results indicate an increase in overall retention rates and quality of student work when studying with senior faculty. Additional student feedback regarding the nature of their relationship with senior faculty and its impact on their attitudes about their academic work are also examined.

The three senior faculty on this panel have more than 75 years of combined experience working with Freshmen including designing and teaching Freshman seminars, working in learning communities, directing Honors programs, and advising first year students.

### **Continuing the Wired Community: On-Line Support for First-Year Success**

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Research indicates that when students connect with peers, faculty, and support services, they are more likely to succeed. But engaging students "for their own good" can be a genuine challenge in an urban public university such as Florida International University, a majority-minority institution where most students live off-campus and split time between work and school. New technology-oriented initiatives at FIU benefit first-year students by providing support and community beyond the campus and traditional school hours.

A variety of approaches to creating and delivering online support will be offered as stimulus to a session-participant discussion. These include:

Online Web-enhanced templates for gateway courses: An online (WebCT) component to our FYE course has been presented at an earlier conference; based on the success of the format, templates are in development for Freshman Composition and two review math courses.

My FIU: In a personalized homepage format, this Peoplesoft portal will provide students with individualized information based on their academic plan, including their progress in required courses and in meeting graduation requirements. Advising, academic status, financial aid, and other resources will be included. This site is still in planning so learning of similar resources at other institutions will be useful.

Gato: This website targets first-year student success with services including academic modules for high-failure gateway courses, links to advisors and problem solvers, and aids for research and writing assignments.

Cinemath: This online tool combines live audio and video with whiteboard writing. Three minute movies on discreet content areas and live online tutors have improved student pass rates in math by 10%.

This presentation will be interactive and invites participants to discuss similar initiatives on their campuses.

### **Atlanta Based Learning: An Inclusive Model for Engaged Learning in the Community**

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Many institutions struggle with the challenge of incorporating civic engagement within their strategic plan and academic mission. Research suggests that successful community engagement initiatives need to incorporate faculty involvement, mirror the institutional identity, and integrate teaching, service, and research priorities (Furco and Holland 2004). National trends in the United States emphasize the positive learning outcomes for civic engagement programs in the undergraduate experience (Zlotkowski 2002, McEwen, 1996).

Atlanta-Based Learning promotes academic and civic engagement with the greater Atlanta community. As an urban research institution, Georgia State offers an opportunity for students to understand the context in which they are developing as learners. Atlanta-Based Learning activities generate connections between the academic curriculum and the urban Atlanta environment. The Atlanta-Based Learning initiative aims to reach across disciplines and colleges to promote a campus-wide effort of engaged learning and to strengthen the University's institutional identity.

Specifically, the Atlanta-Based Learning initiative provides an inclusive model for engaged learning that mirrors the institutional identity, promotes faculty involvement, enhances student learning, and focuses on the comparative advantage of an institution directly linked to its urban environs. This session includes: (1) an overview of Atlanta-Based Learning and its alignment with the institutional identity, (2) the continuum of engagement that includes four dimensions: learning about Atlanta settings, learning from Atlanta Systems, learning with Atlanta Communities, and learning by Atlanta Service-Learning, (3) the assessment outcomes, (4) two case studies that document integration of the FLC theme with Atlanta-Based Learning, and (5) suggestions for adapting the model to fit other institutional needs.

This session highlights the process of establishing Atlanta-Based Learning, working closely with faculty, and aligning the program with the institutional identity of Georgia State University. Finally, participants will learn how to adapt this model of civic engagement and intentional learning to fit their own institutional needs.

## **Access, Engagement & Retention Strategies, Griffith University**

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Griffith University is a multi-campus institution in Australia that serves a wide area, including a region that is socio-economically disadvantaged. A new campus was built in this city which has lower proportions of both professionals and university graduates than the State average and suburbs where youth unemployment exceeds 30%. The university has developed two programs that respond to the community which we serve. Uni-Reach is designed to help financially disadvantaged students access and prepare for higher education. Through partnerships with secondary schools, it aims to encourage and assist Year 12 students who feel motivated to undertake higher education to develop some of the skills needed for university study and a Special Admissions scheme for participating students. Once at university, voluntary association with UniKey provides a customized Orientation Program, a Peer Mentor Program, and academic and general skill development workshops to facilitate the transition to university study. Evaluations of these programs have been positive and indicate that students who enter university through these initiatives perform as well as those who enter through the usual channels.

Since many students on our campuses are the first in their family to participate in higher education strategies, such as Common Time and the Tiered Mentoring Program (TMP), have been developed to foster peer interactions and student-staff interactions. Common Time operates across degree programs in the School of Human Services as a weekly, voluntary semi-structured 3hr activity period for staff and students. Activities include study skills, talks by industry professionals and free time to talk with academic staff. The TMP involves industry professionals mentoring third year students, who in turn mentor first year students. Quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis revealed a wide range of benefits for students and staff in the Common Time program, and for students and professionals involved in the Tiered Mentoring Program.

## **“You Want to Do WHAT???:” The First Year Study Abroad Experience: Experiential and International Education**

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Colleges and universities tend to spend numerous hours recruiting students to participate in and making financial commitment to students for long-term education abroad programs. Although these programs are valid and vital experiences for students, these programs target a population that is already “pre-disposed” to engaging in an international experience due to a particular major or course of language study. Recently, short-term education abroad programs (also known as faculty-led courses lasting less than a semester/term) have been increasingly recognized as legitimate educational and experiential experiences for college and university students. While they are usually for students who would be unable or unlikely to participate in a semester or academic year abroad program, it is our contention that these short-term study abroad programs are an important step in introducing students to the concept of study abroad and will encourage students to embrace subsequent and multiple study abroad opportunities. This session will explore the merits of taking first year students abroad as a part of the first year experience designed to development intellectual skills, engage students in experiential learning, and encourage persistence. By the end of the session, participants will have the tools needed to design and measure outcomes of such program on their home campus.

Hamline University has continually worked to encourage multiple and diverse study abroad programs, but through conversations with academic advisors, we have ascertained that many students start considering such an experience far too late in their college careers to really gain, develop and implement the skills needed to have a meaningful intellectual experience abroad. Thus, we are targeting first-year students for study abroad experiences, while at the same time, we assert that a study abroad experience is an excellent opportunity to teach the general intellectual skills we aim to give all our students in our First Year Seminar program. In this presentation, we will discuss the intellectual development of the first year student as they learn to think critically, read closely and form discussion based on an interest in a specific subject matter. The First Year Seminar, *Germany in the 21st Century: Language, Culture and Society*, was designed with a classroom component and a study abroad component to bring together theory and practice, finishing with the study abroad which “makes real” for the students the material which they have just spent fifteen weeks learning in the classroom. Through in-depth instruction in historical and social development as well as language acquisition, students were able to imagine, then experience, what life is like in present day Germany.

This program was designed to address a number of Hamline University’s strategic goals. It responds to a plan in the College of Liberal Arts to increase students’ opportunities for international/intercultural learning, and it fits within a program of holistic advising located in the First Year Seminar program. Furthermore, as the program involves staff and older students as well as faculty in the education and experiences of these students, the program assists in the integration of academic affairs and student affairs into a seamless whole as they are experienced by our students. Finally, the program contributes to the college’s commitment to student success and retention, and its outcomes are being closely monitored in the areas of students’ language ability, their engagement, and their persistence.

Professor Fangel, Director of Off-Campus Programs, will provide an overview of theories of study abroad and student development, and will discuss Hamline University's goals for multiple study abroad experiences for students. As the leader of the first Study Abroad First Year Seminar, she will also provide details of the planning, execution, and assessment of the class. Dean Tipton will speak to the program's role in contributing to the College's strategic goals, and how the program fits within the First Year Seminar program, the holistic advising initiative, and College retention efforts. Professor Deo will offer an account of the personal and institutional negotiations a faculty member and department chair makes to imagine putting such a course together.

## **The Effects of Learning Communities on First-Year Developmental Students**

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### HCC Ybor City Campus Developmental Learning Community Model (YCC LC)

The YCC LC is comprised of educational structures that link existing developmental courses together and restructure existing curriculum and materials to achieve an overarching theme. The YCC LC cluster of college preparatory classes focuses on the importance of technology throughout American history and in today's society. The currently available YCC LC courses are designed to integrate technology applications with the teaching of college preparatory reading, writing, communication, keyboarding, and study skills. This learning community cluster engages students in activities that share technological information and resources among all of the available courses.

### Program Overview

The YCC LC has been offered for six (6) non-consecutive terms and data has been collected for five non-consecutive semesters. The variables of (1) instructor/student ratio, (2) class scheduling and (3) instructional delivery methods and assessment were manipulated within the YCC LC to determine their effect on (1) student academic performance, (2) classroom attendance, (3) student retention and (4) instructor/student and student/student relations. The effects were measured by analyzing collected data consisting of student placement scores, student pre- and post- test scores, GPA, attendance, retention, and perception surveys.

### YCC LC Data Results

An extensive analysis of the data was performed and observations indicate both LC and non-LC students demonstrated statistically significant growth from Pretest to Posttest. Also, the data revealed the non-LC students began the courses with higher placement scores and higher pretest scores than LC students (due to purposeful selection); yet the LC students demonstrated an equal level of growth from pretest to posttest. Additionally, the LC students finished the semester with an overall higher GPA than the non-LC students.

## **FYE and the Basic Communication Course: Insights from Theory and Practice**

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This presentation explores a unique approach at a medium-sized comprehensive Midwestern university that links a multi-section, basic, oral communication course required of all graduates with other, single first-year courses from a variety of disciplines. Specifically, this presentation describes how the basic oral communication course, Communication 101, which uses a hybrid model and incorporates elements of communication theory, public speaking, interpersonal communication and small group communication, serves as a successful foundation course for linking with other courses in the institution, including business, technology, and a first year orientation course. While the presentation offers insight into the background, benefits, and barriers encountered in forging this innovative link, it also explains the curricular and pedagogical strategies that link the two courses. Particularly, this paper provides a description of the integration of common core FYE competences (based on a model drawn from FYE literature and developed at the institution where this link is implemented) with core competencies for oral communication as developed by the National Communication Association. The presentation also draws upon FYE literature, FYE textbooks, and basic communication course scholarship in order to describe specific, pragmatic oral communication assignments that appropriately and realistically link disciplinary content with the core competencies as defined in the aforementioned FYE model. This presentation also provides specific, practical suggestions for moving FYE and communication education theory into practice in order to assist other institutions and instructors interested in pursuing similar learning community initiatives, while also interrogating the need for considering the international implications of such an approach. This presentation also identifies ways that instructors in other learning community arrangements (e.g., FIGs, FYE seminars) may incorporate oral communication into their FYE initiatives.

### **Civility and Student Success**

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Concern about increasing incivility on campuses is expressed in the United States by Academic and Student Affairs professionals. Sometimes referred to as student “indiscipline” in higher education systems outside the U.S., the focus on student behavior is not new and is very much a part of issues of transition to university culture. This session focuses issues of campus civility and incivility, reviews research that notes a correlation between civility and student retention and success and suggests ways to address incivility effectively through the first year (and beyond).

Many discourses come together in a focus on civility. The emerging significance of civic engagement as a learning value resonates with a need to engage civility as a cultural practice. Documented and perceived rises in student incivility invite an analysis of the changing nature of the college-student population, larger issues about middle class values, educational entitlement, consumerism, as well as contemporary norms guiding social interactions. In addition, while incivility was not an intended outcome of critical pedagogy, which troubled traditional positions in teaching and learning, the resulting “liberated” classroom may contribute to contemporary incivility. How adequately have we prepared professors to negotiate the “liberated” classroom; how well do we socialize students in those spaces--especially the increasing number of students who are under-prepared for social discourse and don't make ready distinctions and easy adjustments between social spaces.

Some research attempts to define, measure, identify causes, and propose solutions to incivility. A candid conversation addresses civility as an intentional aspect of the cultures we would create within our campus communities. The latest issue of *New Directions in Teaching and Learning* focuses exclusively on the topic of “improprieties,” including both student and faculty actions. A connection is made between persistence and student experiences of uncivil classrooms and campus environments.

It may be that the early twenty-first century represents a distinct historical moment within which to open the question of “citizenship” once again to scrutiny.

### **Intensive Freshman Seminars: Academic Immersion in a Summer Intensive**

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Among the multitude of programs available to first year students at Indiana University, the Intensive Freshman Seminars (IFS) program creates a uniquely thick academic landscape designed

to immerse new students in the academic culture of the university. This optional residential summer program, now moving into its sixteenth year, has consistently provided students across the demographic spectrum an opportunity to make an early and meaningful connection to the academy through highly coordinated faculty and student integration.

The IFS program provides the opportunity for any regularly admitted student to get a head start on university life during the three weeks before the semester begins, by taking a three credit-hour seminar course which generally meets distribution requirements. The program is structured as a seamless learning community, providing students with a template that they may use to view the larger academic world. The effectiveness of the IFS approach is rooted in the strong relationships that these beginning students develop with faculty and upper-class peer mentors, as well as the opportunity to form connections with other incoming students.

In this presentation I will detail the faculty development workshops and core themes, training and utilization of student mentors, and the co-curricular activities designed to support the central mission of this learning community. In addition, the presentation will review other components of the IFS program that enhance the overall success, such as the use of on campus resources, writing tutors, campus "cultural treasures," and marketing and recruitment efforts. Finally, I will discuss outcomes of the program, including retention rates, academic success, and related new initiatives such as the yearlong Extended Learning Community and ongoing development of the Peer Mentors.

### **A Welcoming Portal of Entry: Creating Collaborative and Comprehensive Programs for Entering Student Success**

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The Policy Center for the First College Year has outlined foundational dimensions of excellence for working with entering students. Among the dimensions is the Organization Dimension which states: “Create organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year. These structures and policies provide oversight and alignment of all first-year efforts. A coherent first-year experience is realized and maintained through effective partnerships among academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units and is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements.”

Whether designated as “university college,” “division of undergraduate studies,” “general college,” or “junior division,” these units embrace the strategy of a broadly-based campus collaboration among all aspects and personnel of the institution which impact the successful adaptation of entering students. This model which provides a context for working with entering students is attracting renewed attention in the United States and in other countries as a means for supporting entering students. The models at UTEP and IUPUI are each extensive but also are distinct in their approaches. The common features are the following:

- Collaborations with P-12 including programs for younger students and their parents.
- Collaborations among units serving students at entry including admissions and student affairs.
- Joint Appointments of faculty and of staff.
- Curricular Approaches. Both universities have centered efforts in the classroom – with courses providing key interventions.
- Strong Academic Support Services
- Assessment

The presenters will share descriptions of their approaches to these elements and will invite program participants to consider strategies and programs on their campuses for providing an organizational context for supporting entering students.

### **A Purpose-Guided Structured Approach for Undecided First-Year Students**

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The transition from home to college is considered by many to be the most traumatic of all life transitions. For students in this transitional phase who have not yet declared majors and who are still exploring options for a major, the trauma can be compounded because these students often lack a clear picture of how to navigate the first year experience in a manner that will keep them on track to find a major and to graduate in a timely manner. The result can be an ambiguous first year experience followed by a strong temptation to not return in the second year. Indiana Wesleyan University has established the Center for Life Calling and Leadership to address this problem with its students in this category. This presentation will show how our advocacy for students who are exploring options provides them with equal or greater support to that of students with majors who are supported by various academic departments. Further, it will be explained how our experience has shown that a structured approach that gives clear direction based on a search for life purpose is the most effective approach to the first year experience. This provides an anchor for the first year experience. This program at the same time allows for flexibility in exploration. The theory and evidence behind this approach will be presented, and examples and practical programs will be shared—including the syllabus for a 3-credit hour exploration course.

### **Iceberg Ahead: Charting a Course from Bright Idea to Successful Institutional Initiative**

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This four person presentation (comprised of an English professor/Dean of Arts & Sciences; an instructor in the Occupational Therapy Assistant program (OTA); a Dean of Student Development Education/Executive Director Institutional Effectiveness; and an Instructor/Assistant Dean of Student Development Education) will trace the evolution of learning communities at a two-year technical college over the last seven years. It will explain how the learning community model has been adapted to achieve particular student learning and program outcomes, while detailing obstacles encountered and overcome in the process. Course, program and institution-wide assessment; student advising; institutional design; pedagogical models; and teaching partnerships required to accomplish sustainable institutional processes will be presented. Data on progress and accomplishment levels of students involved in learning communities comparative to the college's general student populations will be shared. A partnership that began seven years ago between an OTA instructor and a Speech instructor who combined two courses for a single term has matured to encompass nine faculty members and courses from Communications, English Composition, Medical Assisting, Abnormal Psychology plus a range of first and second year OTA offerings. This initiative was recently recognized as an exemplary model by OTA's national accrediting body and has spread to other areas of the college. For example, one presenter developed campus learning communities linking the college's first year experience course (SDE-101) and Reading and Study Skills (COM-103) and plans to establish a similar fusion with a basic computing course. All presenters have designed and taught learning communities which adapt the learning communities paradigm to their particular subject matter and teaching styles, thereby offering a diversity of insights on how to customize the experience.

### **Creative Uses of Technology in the Freshman Seminar Course**

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The purpose of this session is to present how the use of Blackboard could complement the teaching of the student success course. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, in New York City, is a unique urban college, where most students have a multitude of life roles. Many times their "real life" responsibilities prevent them from attending class or handing-in their assignments on time.

The presenter will discuss how Blackboard can assist those students who cannot attend class and how it could be used as a supplemental mean to enhance student learning in general. The presentation will focus on the setup and usefulness of various information through Blackboard, such as class announcements, class documents, assignments, links to internet sites, on-line discussions, delivery of assignments via e-mail, practice tests and grading.

### **Peer Mentoring: Personal Connections**

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As a comprehensive urban college in New York City, the challenge in the first year is to connect to students with diverse learning skills in a meaningful way that both supports academic adjustment and promotes scholarship and excellence. First Year Advisement is an important component of the freshmen experience. Advisement is a strategic initiative that guides students throughout the undergraduate experience. Presently, the college offers an orientation course for half of the freshman class. The other half are connected through the peer mentoring program.

Helping students to negotiate the process of becoming, is to provide freshmen with appropriate role models. Peer mentoring is particularly important on an urban commuter college campus where most students do not use student services or make connections to faculty, professional staff or other students. For many students, the college experience is very isolating.

In the fall of 2000, the freshmen peer mentoring program was launched. Peer mentors are upper division honor students who provide academic and social outreach programs to first year students. Peer mentoring has made a significant difference in the retention of first year students with growth by 7% of baccalaureate degree and by 9% for associate degree students. Graduation rate has also improved by 5%.

This round table discussion will include a description of the peer mentoring training program, creative and cost effective strategies for connecting to students, and the impact the mentoring program on advisement and retention.

Additionally, the presenters will provide an overview of other advisement initiatives designed to engage students. One important aspect of the round table discussion will be the sharing of experiences in developing new peer mentoring initiatives that connect freshmen to the institution and to each other.

### **OWLS: Outfitting Women Leaders in the Sciences**

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The dearth of women in technology is similar to that experienced previously in mathematics and other scientific disciplines. Women's perspectives and voices are important to the future of all scientific endeavors. In 2001, Kennesaw faculty members in the sciences began meeting to identify ways to encourage and support women interested in science and technology. One important initiative identified by the group was the development of a first year seminar around this theme. Faculty members participated in the Women in Science program at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh during summer 2002 which led to the initial course outline. The course has now been offered twice. During fall 2005 this course will be combined with a mathematics and English composition course to create a "learning community" of first year women interested in science, technology, and mathematics. This cohort of 3 courses will allow students to further build community and skills for success.

Our presentation will focus on the content of the course, including on-going assessment and improvement activities, as well as a presentation of related research. Course content includes several field trips, study of famous women in science, and presentations by practitioners, researchers, and other professionals interested in encouraging this set of students. For example, biology faculty guided students through a tour of the university's greenhouse and arboretum, explaining environmental issues and problems. Students were also required to participate in professional meetings, especially those offered by university clubs in the sciences. Classroom presentations include the following topics:

- Math Success and How to Use Your Programmable Calculator
- Top 10 Technology Skills
- The Accidental Plagiarist
- Ethical Implications of the Information Age

- Myths of CSI (Crime Scene Investigation)
- Forensics and Biotechnology
- Panel of Female Seniors in Science and Technology
- Roles We Play - Skit and Discussion

## **Envisioning the Future: The Development of a University College**

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Beginning in 1987, Kennesaw College was known as the “Harvard in the Pines.” It was a small, junior college. Campus life involved movement to and from the parking lots. Non-traditional students, received excellent education but lacked engagement with a campus environment. By using the transformative model of institutional change and focusing on: the people, process, programs, policies, and places at Kennesaw State was revisioned. Student success was at the heart of all change. New administrative structures were developed, including an office of Student Success. A better process of working with students was instituted. Programs such as Student Success, and First Year courses, were developed in answer to the value on student achievement. Policy development kept student success at the heart of decision making. Brick and mortar structures continued to change as we looked to better serve broader communities. With over 18,000 students, Kennesaw State University is now a major urban university. The Foundations of Excellence and American Democracy initiatives, in which KSU participated, continued to transform these unique campus programs. Campus visits by Dr. John Gardner and Dr. Edward Zyltowsky provided additional feedback on program needs. Internal program review and assurance of learning initiatives developed more systematic, student-focused institutional assessment. The nexus of these initiatives produced sustained thinking in the administration about the need for a University College. Embarking on projections for an increasing student body, new program requirements, and a new Carnegie classification continue to move Kennesaw forward. At

the same time, it is important to honor the challenges, the “opportunities,” and the “fierce conversations” that have brought us to our current status. We are propelled into the future because of visionary leadership, quality faculty, community involvement, a culture of excellence, and extraordinary students. Current strategic planning, spurs into the next decade of transformation.

### **Folio Thinking from First-Year Success to Global Citizenship: Preparing for the 21st Century Workplace with Electronic College Portfolios as a Kaleidoscopic Learning Process**

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Join the international academic conversation on using the Folio Thinking Process for First-Year Success to Global Citizenship: Preparing for the 21st Century Workplace with Electronic College Portfolios as a Kaleidoscopic Learning Process. The availability of new technologies make electronic college portfolios a kaleidoscopic learning process allowing first-year seminar college students to clearly view, reflect, and connect their learning from self to global society. Electronic College Portfolios take learning beyond the college transcript, mirroring the current culture of the 21st century workforce, which requires knowledge workers to reflect, assess, and manage their learning plans for continued education, keeping current with the necessary expertise development in their technologically global worksites and communities, for the better good of society.

Whether you are exploring, considering or currently using the Electronic College Portfolio, come ready to join this rich discussion of on Folio Thinking from First-Year Success to Global Citizenship: Preparing for the 21st Century Workplace with Electronic College Portfolios as Kaleidoscopic Learning Process.. Bring samples of first-year seminar students' Electronic College Portfolios, ideas teaching the folio thinking process, tips on using the latest software to create E-Portfolio training for first-year seminar students, information for using and integrating varying technology platforms such as the institutional desktop, institutional intranet, and institutional internet designs for e-portfolios, tips on how to assess portfolios, ideas on how to use E-Portfolios for scholarships, internships, academic advising, careers, and preparation for global citizenship. Come to the conversation roundtable for an inspiring exchange of your ideas and materials on the empowerment of using folio thinking in the First-Year Seminar, gateway to college student success in higher education and global society.

### **Enhancing First-Year Students' Progression through a Comprehensive Skills Development Programme**

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The paper presents a comprehensive programme for the development of skills of first-year students.

Firstly, recent research findings are considered. Research in the UK revealed that students from all backgrounds need support to learn successfully at university. Whilst it was previously assumed that students who access university through widening participation initiatives lack the required skills, it is increasingly being recognised that 'traditional' students also are not sufficiently prepared by the A-level curriculum, especially in terms of independent learning skills and expectations. This lack of skills and preparedness affects their progression and retention. UK figures demonstrate that the withdrawal rate is highest among first-year students.

Secondly, the paper reports on current practice at universities. Skills development tends to rely on centralised provision of skills courses and/or individual initiatives by lecturers. However, centralised skills courses are regarded as least effective, because they do not reach all students. They are not perceived as relevant because they are unrelated to subject-specific content. As individual initiatives have little effect on the long-term development of the learner, a holistic approach is required to equip first-year students with the necessary skills.

Principles for designing the comprehensive skills development programme for first-year students are discussed next, followed by a detailed description of the programme's features. The programme is based on existing good practice as well as on discussions with eighty-five academic teachers. It includes pre-induction and induction activities, mentoring and personal tutoring components, specific interventions, as well as embedding skills development into the first year curriculum. Taking into consideration the limitations in staff time and resources, the programme offers a variety of online activities. In order to ensure the relevance of the programme to the students, it is

integrated into the first-year courses, and all materials used in the programme are subject-specific. Finally, the results of piloting components of the programme with first-year students are presented.

### **Student Lives, Student Studies--Helping Students to Integrate their Lives and Learning Through ePortfolios**

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The institutions in this presentation are large, urban, American institutions that are each developing and studying ways to improve and assess integrative learning in first year experience programs. Despite our differences as a two-year and four-year institution, we have many parallels in the ways that we approach first year programs & ePortfolio, using learning communities as the basis for an integrated approach to student learning.

PSU and LaGuardia both use ePortfolios but in different ways and places in the curriculum. Both Portland State University and LaGuardia Community College use ePortfolios as the culmination of their first year learning communities. For Portland State University, the ePortfolio comes at the end of a year-long integrated first year studies program. PSU embeds ePortfolios in the first year courses in its general education program and is in the process of expanding the ePortfolios through

the four level program including the study abroad program. For LaGuardia, the ePortfolio comes at the end of a first semester basic skills' learning community and again at the end of the second semester in a cooperative education course.

The ePortfolio is an innovative, multimedia tool for presenting student work that offers a rich and textured view of a student's learning and development. A powerful means of authorship and ownership in education, the ePortfolio offers students the opportunity to select materials from their college careers to create a body of work that represents their learning over the course of their education. ePortfolios function as a critical tool to deepen their learning, build critical thinking skills, and make links between academic work and lived experience.

### **First-Year Retention and Community Through Music and the Arts**

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One of the greatest features of a liberal arts Lutheran college is its focus on building community in the first-year experience. Where do the arts and music fit into this deliberate focus? Dead center. Luther College has been very successful in building a campus community by merging the arts in the day to day lives of nearly half the student population and specifically it's first-year students.

I would like to propose the following:

- I would like to present a lecture/presentation on the emphasis of the first-year experience in music and the arts at Luther.
  1. Instrumental
  2. Vocal
  - 3 Theatre/Dance
  4. Ensemble experiences
  5. Percentages and numbers
- Given that more than 50% of a first-year class at Luther College participates in band, choir, and orchestra, I would like to share ideas about the ensemble experiences that immediately create a natural community.
- I would also focus on campus-wide first-year student participation in music activities shared beyond departmental boundaries by students, faculty, and staff and how this positively affects overall retention rates from the first-year to second year.

Luther College is one of many institutions that has discovered the value of a vibrant music department in a liberal arts environment. A unique feature at Luther is the tremendous administrative support, high percentage of non-major participation, morale and support of each ensemble by students, and tremendous retention rate of participating students after the first year and throughout their four years.

## **Transition to University - Lessons Learned and the Student View**

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The Macquarie University Transition Program was developed as a result of the collaboration of interested academic and non academic staff and implemented by the Development and Research Officer. It has expanded and developed since its inception in 2001 based on the evaluation of the stakeholders. Initially the program concentrated on providing commencing students at Division (Faculty) based Academic Orientation days with information that made them aware of the academic expectations of university study and the programs that existed to support them. It has developed, based on assessment from commencing students, current student mentors and staff, into a less information-intensive but more student-driven interactive day, with information emailed to new students at appropriate intervals during the first semester. The mentor program has been critical to the success of the new format.

Mentors are recruited from second year and above students and trained to provide appropriate support to new students, which does not include academic tutoring. In some Divisions a Peer Assisted Learning program is being piloted, in collaboration with the Transition Program.

The program has also developed a Postgraduate Coursework Information and Skills Workshop which focuses on writing at postgraduate level and library research skills - the two aspects of postgraduate study identified by students as most important.

Since a number of Macquarie's commencing students are the first in their family to attend university, the Transition Program provides a Family Orientation Evening, attended by a wide range of academic staff to welcome and familiarize families with the demands and expectations of university life and study. This is an informal occasion at which parents and new students have, and take, the opportunity to speak to executive, academic and general staff about their concerns.

A school visit program to promote transition issues to final year school students is also available.

### **Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year: In the U.S. and Beyond.**

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In the Foundations of Excellence in the First Year of College Project, colleges conducted a self-study of first year practices based on an aspirational model of nine foundational dimensions. Medgar Evers College, a public urban comprehensive non-residential college in the City University of New York, was selected to join eleven other AASCU colleges as founding institutions in this national initiative. This presentation highlights what we learned about first-year practices, new approaches to data analysis and ongoing assessment, and the development and implementation of improvement plans.

We will discuss the importance of establishing standards of excellence for the first year of college and invite discussion of the cross cultural implications and challenges of applying such standards.

The self-study at Medgar Evers College fostered interdisciplinary interaction and dialogue between faculty and administrators, which resulted in a greater understanding of our First Year Experience. Our findings underscored the importance of understanding who our students are and developing programs that ensure student success beginning with the first year of study. Keys to the creation and maintenance of successful programs include assessing students' needs, evaluating programming, and applying assessment information in ongoing programmatic renewal and development. We also found that campus-wide commitment, including administrative and faculty buy-in regarding the importance of first-year programming are essential. We welcome dialogue about how non-US institutions think about, assess and meet the challenges of first-year programming.

Our study confirmed that the College, in keeping with its mission, continues to have a focus on students, the improvement of programs and support services and the use of systematic ongoing assessment to inform first-year programs and services. Task Force activities led to some recommendations for improvement that were carried out immediately and others that require additional planning, and time for implementation. We will detail our improvement plan addressing each of the nine Foundational Dimensions.

### **How a Fertile Question Led to Abundant Answers: Sowing the Curricular Seeds of Increased Retention and Graduation Rates at an Urban University**

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Improving retention and graduation rates is an oft touted benefit of FYE courses. This session describes how curricular changes have significantly increased retention and graduation rates among a diverse population of students who are both non-traditional and traditional aged. Metropolitan State University is a comprehensive urban university that provides liberal arts and professional education to the Twin Cities metropolitan area in Minnesota, with an emphasis on underserved groups, including adults and communities of color. We currently serve over 9,000 students many of whom are non-traditional in a variety of ways: 73% attend school part-time; 67% work full-time; 60% are female; 23% are students of color; 32 is the average age; and ages range from 14 to 75.

Our diverse student population presents unique challenges in terms of developing FYE courses that meet the differing needs of traditional and non-traditional students. We have addressed that challenge by framing two of our core courses around the question “What does it mean to be an educated person?” Our experience has shown that helping students explore this question yields a variety of benefits, most notably increased retention and graduation rates.

Megumi Yamasaki will share curricular materials and methods for adapting the skills core of METR 101 Your Academic Journey (a course that serves students with 0 to 16 semester credits) to focus on the “educated person” question. This course most closely parallels traditional FYE courses and often includes more traditional-aged students. Yamasaki will also report on retention and graduation rates in relation to this course.

Mary Kirk will share curricular materials and methods for PRSP 301 Perspectives: Educational Philosophy & Planning (the reentry course for returning adult students developing individualized

degrees). This course usually includes more non-traditional students. Kirk will also report on retention and graduation rates in relation to this course.

## **Institutional Habitus Vs Individual Capital**

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Findings from the ISLER research were reported on at last years conference, stressing the importance of early pre-entry advice and guidance, integrated support systems and the clear administrative and organizational issues in helping students to remain. Issues reported on that appear to enhance persistence included innovative teaching methods, positive early student experience and clear motivations on the part of the students. A further year on the emphasis of the ISLER findings point towards the complex interplay of the institutional habitus and the individual capital. The research found that when contemplating issues of withdrawal the balance between the institutions and individuals responsibility is often questioned.

This session highlights the importance of a holistic approach in embedding a culture of student centredness within the whole of the institution but also creating personal autonomy among the students.

The data has been sought from a varied of sources and methods, but primarily from student that withdrew within their first 12 months of enrolment and students that have successfully progressed onto level 2. Data for this update derives from: over 113 interviews with students since September 2002, over 300 have completed questionnaires, 10 students were 'tracked' through their first year and a small number of module leaders have participated in this research.

The findings highlighted the importance of identity, value, belonging and the emotions of the student which shall be explored within the session.

## **Academic and Business Models of Advocacy, Leadership and Change – Are we Different or Alike?**

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In the 2005 Jossey-Bass Book, *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student*, (in a chapter entitled, “Advocating for First-Year Students,”) Chaskes and Anttonen discuss the concepts of advocacy, leadership and change. They also propose under the heading, *The Micro Politics of Advocacy*, a skill set which they argue advocates use in “exercising their leadership on behalf of first year students.” Included in this skill set are, passion and caring, active listening, creativity and flexibility, risk taking, sense of humor and patience but persistence.

With today’s higher education institutions facing a continual decline in funding and the call for more outcome based assessment, the business model of productivity is often seen as the manner in which universities and colleges should be functioning. Yet, are these two worlds different? Do they share any commonality?

In this session, the co author of *Advocating for First Year Students* and a professor of higher education for 39 years and an information technology professional with 16 years in the corporate world (including one year in both France and Ireland) examine the concepts of advocacy, leadership and change as they relate to the two worlds of higher education and business. The presentation will key in on the skill set identified above to identify commonalities between the two worlds. Also the strategies, myths and realities of the two will also be examined and discussed.

In addition, some of the basic differences between the two worlds e.g., academic freedom versus confidentiality agreements, qualitative measures of success versus dividend per share etc. will be highlighted.

Finally, with the current emphasis on spirituality, the importance of trust, honesty, authenticity and people support will be emphasized as a common trend that is involved in the success of both program building and change in the systems of higher education and business.

### **Formative to Summative: Innoculation against First Year Assessment**

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Students enter university with little or no experience of the modes of assessment commonly used. Their immediate exposure to 'high stakes' assessment can produce anxiety and poor performance. In order to decrease the level of anxiety experienced, and improve performance, our students are given experience with formative versions of each of the assessment modalities they will experience during the year before they are asked to face matching summative assessments. This process begins at a compulsory three-day Transition Residential Program held at the beginning of the year. At this, students are introduced to the objectives of assessment for the year, and have a first experience of unfamiliar types of assessment that are commonly used in our course. Formative questions are provided for each week on the course website, to encourage students to begin evaluating their grasp of the material. A formative ('no stakes') written paper, project and OSCE are provided during the semester, and the results allow the identification of students whose performance is unsatisfactory or 'borderline', before such performance impacts on the students' progress. Students identified as being 'at-risk' in this way are given the opportunity to participate in a variety of interventions. The overall assessment of progress for the Semester is on the basis of Pass Grade Only ('low stakes'), although students receive feedback on their individual results. Only in second year are 'high stakes' summative assessments introduced. Evaluation indicates that satisfaction with preparation for assessment is high, and stress is lower than in comparable first year programs.

### **Early and Response System (E.A.R.S.): An Innovative Initiative for First-Year Higher Retention**

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The presenter will review the Early Alert & Response System (E.A.R.S.) as a part of the University's campus-wide Retention Program. The presenter will talk about the role of the faculty. The presenter will talk about the seven things that faculty should do to make the program a success.

The presenter will discuss the E.A.R.S. system. The system involves several alerts. **FIRST ALERT:** At the beginning of the semester, the retention coordinator provides faculty members with a list of all freshmen enrolled in the targeted general education courses whose SAT scores are marginal.

**SECOND ALERT:** At the end of the third full week of class, faculty members will complete an E.A.R.S. form, hand a copy to the student, retain a copy for their files and forward three copies to the Coordinator for General Education. The Coordinator will distribute the remaining copies to the Dean, the Chairperson and the Adviser.

**THIRD ALERT:** This alert, following the same pattern outlined above, will come at mid-term. This time, in addition, chairpersons will hold mandatory group meetings with all of their majors who have received alerts and speak to them about the serious consequences of their poor performance and about possible remedies to pursue.

**FOURTH ALERT:** This alert comes after the eleventh week of the semester, approximately three weeks before the last day of classes. This time, chairpersons will meet individually with their majors to discuss the matter.

**AFTER-THE-SEMESTER ALERT:** Before the beginning of the next semester, chairpersons, having reviewed the performance of all of the freshmen students in the department, will send a letter to all students whose semester averages fall below 2.0, alerting them of their probationary status and requiring a conference with their faculty advisers at the beginning of next semester.

Also, E.A.R.S. forms will be distributed and assessment will be discussed.

## **Contemplative Education**

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Naropa University is a Buddhist-inspired, non-sectarian, ecumenical institution renowned for its long-standing commitment to contemplative education. Since its founding thirty years ago, Naropa's educational goals have been shaped by this commitment to integrating the outer world of

knowledge with the inner life of the person.

Naropa began as a graduate institution and just five years ago instituted a full four-year undergraduate program. We are in the process of revising our core curriculum, and the challenge in this undertaking has been to develop an academically rigorous core program that meets the unique needs of first- and second-year students, without sacrificing our holistic and contemplative tradition.

At the forefront of the inquiry into the relationship between spirituality and liberal education (cf Astin 2004), Naropa faculty work to integrate non-sectarian spiritual values with intellectual knowledge. Central to Naropa's Institutional Mission Statement is the integration of the outer world of knowledge with the inner life of the person:

To cultivate awareness of the present moment

To foster a learning community

To cultivate openness which includes these five qualities:

- ? Openness and respect for one's immediate experience
- ? Interpersonal and communication skills
- ? Sharpened critical intellect
- ? Resourcefulness and appreciation of the richness of one's world
- ? Effective action

To continue a Buddhist educational heritage

To explore and honor world wisdom traditions

To be non-sectarian and open to all

In this roundtable, we will discuss contemplative education as the foundation of a core program. Our discussion will survey the inclusion of contemplative practices such as "deep listening," meditation exercises that create a calm and open learning environment in the classroom, the oral testing procedure known as "the warrior exam," and the ways Naropa utilizes classroom activities to practice compassionate engagement and build confidence in students so that the learning that takes place in the classroom flows naturally into life outside of the academy.

We will illustrate Naropa's "Introduction to Contemplative Practice" core course, required of all Naropa students. In addition, we will demonstrate Naropa's integration of Diversity Education, beginning with our year-long sequence of First Year Diversity courses, as central to our contemplative mission. We will discuss how our Second Year Seminar, "Community Based

Learning”, builds on the core competencies introduced in the First Year Seminar, while providing students the opportunity to engage in service learning in the greater community, based on the recognition that one’s own well being is intimately intertwined with that of others.

We will provide participants with exercises and syllabi as well as data from Naropa’s own assessment models, and those from Contemplative Mind and Society and the Center for Integrative Learning in Action.

## **Academic Development and Support to First-Year Students as Part**

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The University Practice Course is a credit-bearing fundamental module that aims to support and empower first-year students to be purposeful, successful learners, who are able to cope with the demands of higher education. We are offering them an opportunity to develop their academic and lifeskills and maximize their potential. The course is offered in small groups of 15 -20 students. The Experiential Learning cycle offers students a chance to reflect and learn from their and other students experiences. Further support is offered through individual mentoring. As the course is credit-bearing we have to be accountable and therefore students do assignments and write a test.

The aim of the poster is to share our practice

The sharing of our practice is of great importance as it stimulates us to reflect on what we are offering and with that, it gives us the opportunity to develop it further. Sharing enables reflective practice – it is practical as there is more opportunity for in dept discussion with those really interested. Our success is considered to be partly due to:

- Small group teaching (15-20 students per group)
- Using the Experiential Learning method (giving students a chance to reflect and learn from others)
- Offering individual mentoring (support is offered to all our students – we then refer them to other resources)
- Being Student Centered (we have the students needs at heart)
- Assessment of academic and lifeskills (as the course is credit-bearing we have to be accountable and therefore students do assignments and write a test)
- The content of the course (academic and lifeskills)

- Students feedback (a video of students comments)
- Some research evidence

### **Mentoring Faculty and Students: A Faculty and Administrative Strategy**

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The research to be presented is based on a combination of three studies that highlight the importance of mentoring students, faculty, and staff. Dr. Jay Chaskes and Dr. Ralph Anttonen recently published research on First-Year Student Advocate Award Recipients that identified mentoring as one of the significant components in the Freshman Advocates' professional development and success in academia. A new survey developed by Dr. Anttonen in conjunction with The National Resource Center for The First Year Experience and Students in Transition sheds more light on critical components of mentoring in higher education from the First-Year Student Advocates' perspective. Dr. Walter and his colleagues Professors James Berry and Gerald Faye have investigated the role of senior faculty mentoring junior faculty and staff. It is the intent of the presentation to focus on what appears to constitute mentoring from the perspective of both administrators and faculty for both students, faculty, and staff. We intend to focus on the following critical issues. What are the commonalities in the ways in which administrators and faculty mentor students, faculty, and staff? What are the differences, if any, in the ways in which we mentor students, faculty, and staff? Does the research bare out the perspective that their is a clear model of what constitutes the mentoring process regardless of who is being mentored? By bringing together the results of research on the role of mentoring and the mentoring process as viewed by both administrators and faculty, we can enhance our ability to put into place mentoring that will enhance the potential for success of students, faculty, and staff during the early stages of their careers.

### **The Haves and the Have Nots-The Distance Between**

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The Moderator will begin the session by defining those students that are not academically prepared to take college-level courses. After the introductory comments, the presenting team will determine from the number attending whether to break up into smaller groups or remain as one group. If there are groups, then time will be reserved at the end for reporting out of group activities.

Attendees will be asked to identify and describe their institutions and give a brief characterization of a typical freshman at their schools. Those schools with mostly "prepared" freshmen will be distinguished from those that have mostly "underprepared" freshmen. Those with "prepared" students will be asked to discuss first year or student success activities at their campuses, followed by a similar discussion from the "underprepared" groups. All of the groups will discuss the major differences and similarities of the activities.

Then the discussion will turn to what kinds of academically advanced activities can be incorporated into the first year experience for the "underprepared" cohorts. We will discuss whether there is even a need to do this for students with such deficiencies in basic skills. The groups will be asked to defend their answers.

The team members will ask the attendees to summarize the discussions and indicate which suggestions they found might be of use to their students. The Moderator will collect e-mail addresses and/or business cards from the participants and send them a written summary of the session for future reference.

### **Learning with Peers: Lessons from Two Programs**

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Portland State University's (PSU) 10-year and San Jose State University's (SJSU) 3-year Peer Mentor Program utilize undergraduate mentors in their FYE programs. Data from surveys, faculty and student evaluations and student reflection papers from both universities show that the Peer

Mentor Program significantly contributes to the success of the first year students as well as the Mentors themselves. Directors of these programs will share lessons learned, resources, assessment instruments and data regarding the selection, training, supervision and effectiveness of Peer Mentors on their campuses. Participants will be given the time to actively engage in conversation about working with mentors.

At SJSU, mentors are linked to and attend individual academic FYE seminars and work in the Peer Mentor Center. In the FYE classroom and at the Center, mentors facilitate discussions on academic topics (e.g. how to approach assignments, talk to a professor, use technology, write a paper) and other student concerns (e.g. stress and time management, living in the residence hall, dealing with parents, finding resources on campus, making friends). SJSU mentors use laptops to model scholarly use of computers in and out of the classroom. One Mentor works as an International Mentor in SJSU's study-abroad program in Bath.

At PSU, the mentors work with faculty to deliver the yearlong interdisciplinary curriculum of the first-year general education program and conduct their own peer mentor sessions twice a week. They actively engage students in smaller group sessions to extend students' learning in the course, help develop technology skills, including the development of e-portfolios, and learn academic and life skills.

Both programs are highly competitive. Mentors are selected and trained in a course taught during the spring semester prior to their work as Mentors. Compensation of the mentors will be discussed. Both programs value and provide ongoing training and supervision through group meetings.

### **A Model for First-Year Student Support – the Importance of a Holistic Approach**

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This presentation will focus on the strategic work of the study counsellors at the Programme for

Education at Linköping university. The study counsellors provide professional perspective on student experiences and needs. They are part of the programme management in order to achieve a holistic approach on introduction and student support.

The presentation consists of the following parts:

- Background on the programme and the heterogeneous student group and their specific need for social and academic introduction as well as opportunities to develop their professional identity, teaching skills and career planning skills
- Description of the organization of the programme management where the study counsellors and the programme directors form a strategic group who set the goals for student support. The counsellors are responsible for the planning and implementation of these goals through different activities. They engage academic staff, student organizations and mentors in school practice to take part in the work. In order to motivate and ensure the understanding of common goals they also arrange regular seminars and discussions with all parties involved.
- A picture of the specific activities offered including seminars, study workshops, proactive actions and direct support.
- Evidence of assessment through yearly evaluation of the introduction together with statistics from contacts with counsellors, drop-out rates and choices within the programme.

### **Getting the Business Advantage: Enhancing the Student Experience Through Personal and Professional Development Programs**

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The Business Advantage program was established in the Faculty of Business at QUT in 2004. The program was designed to meet a number of needs identified by the Faculty and the University including: helping students develop the personal and professional skills necessary to survive academically and in later life; helping first year students make the transition to university; aiding students to develop networks amongst themselves and with people in the broader community; fostering a sense of connectedness for students with the University and hopefully leading to stronger alumni in the future; easing attrition amongst both new and continuing students; providing a forum outside of class for students to undertake developmental and social activities; and allowing

students to experience a 'fuller' university experience.

Available to all students in the Faculty it has been primarily targeted at, and especially embraced by those at undergraduate level in the early years of the degree.

The Program has proven a huge success in its first year with over 1000 students applying to be involved. It has received two awards at the University level and has recently been nominated for the Australian Universities Teaching Institutional Initiatives awards.

This presentation will detail the Business Advantage Program including: the reasons for the program; the range of activities across the personal, professional, cultural, intercultural and community activities that have been developed; a discussion of the costs and resources required to run a program of this size; an indication of the outcomes that have already been achieved for the students, including feedback from the students and external partners; and how the program has provided a vehicle to allow students to partake of other major developmental initiatives locally, nationally and globally (Students in Free Enterprise is one example).

### **Beyond Curriculum Reform: Institutionalizing the Transition Experience**

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In acknowledging and responding to the well documented diverse needs of commencing students (James, 2002), much research work, resource development and radical curriculum redesign has been undertaken in disparate discipline and support areas throughout the University to scaffold for student engagement and to assure a successful first year experience (FYE) for our students in their transition to study in the discipline of their choice.

However, as the Policy Center on the First Year of College, Brevard College (<http://www.brevard.edu/fyc/>) has warned, institutional effectiveness in promoting the learning and success of all students in transition is dependent on the creation of organisational structures to provide a "comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year that is realized and maintained through effective partnerships among academic affairs, student affairs, and other administrative units; and is enhanced by ongoing faculty and staff development activities and appropriate budgetary arrangements".

This work has now informed a much more ambitious project which is the subject of our proposed presentation. Using "joined-up" thinking, a MLE is being created. This environment is enabled by establishing a personal profile of each first year learner on their virtual arrival at university. The

profile will be used to enable specific resources to be pushed to or pulled by students, based on their individual learning needs and programs (no matter which degree course they are taking, units enrolled in, or class allocations). Our proposed MLE for the FYE will utilise existing institutional information systems and processes (including the institutional online learning environment) to provide commencing and transition students with “just-in-time” resources and assistance mapped against their position in their first year journey, as triggered by critical dates and/or teacher intervention. It is hoped that this MLE approach, where both pedagogical and technological affordances are aligned effectively in a compelling student-centred environment, will ultimately embed an institutional curriculum-mediated transition strategy that is tailor-made for transforming the first year experience.

### **Helping Students Succeed in College: Assessing & Enhancing Emotional Intelligence Skills**

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College students, more than ever before in our history, are entering college lacking emotional intelligence skills. This presentation will review the research which indicates that students lack the emotional intelligence skills needed to do well in college and do well in the workplace after college. It will discuss college and university programs that are now beginning to educate students using a broad, holistic approach that combines “hard” job related knowledge and skills with “soft” social skills. This proposal will also define Emotional Intelligence, explore Emotional Intelligence skills, and discuss the role of Emotional Intelligence in the life and success of first-year college students.

This presentation will use the Theory of Emotional Intelligence to provide a framework for higher education faculty and staff to use to help their students become more successful in college. Next, it will explore the Skills Programs as a means for helping students to identify and master a variety of emotional intelligence skills. The Skills Programs (Liptak, 2005, 2004, 2002) are reproducible books of assessments, activities, and educational handouts specifically designed to measure important Emotional Intelligence skills for first-year students. In addition, the Skills Programs can be used to help first-year students develop more effective Emotional Intelligence competencies to aid in retention and contribute to their future success. Lastly, the proposal will describe a program that uses the Skills Programs to teach Emotional Intelligence skills to first year students at Radford University.

### **A Living and Learning Approach to the Retention of Science and Math Students**

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The program consists of five major components that will be outlined in the presentation:

1. Curriculum Enrichment (including a pre-college summer bridge

program, Enrichment Resource Center, and a living arrangement called the Villages of Science and Technology or VOSAT) - The poster presentation will outline some of the barriers that were encountered during the establishment of the Villages of Science and Technology in the dormitories. Pictures of the dorm set-up will be shown along with how the dorms are actually utilized to incorporate living and learning.

Methods used to incorporate living into the classroom will also be outlined. The pre-college summer bridge program's challenges will be provided. The program was initially for entering first-time freshmen and was modified to include rising sophomore students. The justification for this switch will be provided. The Enrichment Center which houses computers for supplemental enrichment in science and

mathematics, will be shown. Faculty are required to recommend students to the Enrichment Center who are not passing their first exam. This is a major intervention strategy utilized and this approach will be provided.

2. Undergraduate Research Experiences - Methods used to set up a viable undergraduate research program on a small liberal arts campus that does not traditionally provide state of the art research will be outlined.

3. Seminars and Workshops - This component of the program will demonstrate how effective it is to house small seminar classes and

workshops in the dormitories to create a living and learning

environment.

4. Scholarships - A very important factor in establishing a successful Living and Learning program is student scholarships. The program will discuss how students give back to the college by assisting in after-school science enrichment academy (SEA) for secondary school

students in grades 3-12. This is an excellent way to provide outreach

services with minimal cost to the college.

5. Faculty Development - This is a challenging area that has some

success stories that will be provided in our poster presentation. Discussions will include some of the resisting factors that faculty encounter when required to establish living and learning environments.

### **Two Approaches to Learning Communities: The Honors Model and the Honor-Like Generalist Model for the Career-Minded First-Year Student**

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In order to develop a better defined honors culture on campus and to increase the number of students who are graduated from the program, the curriculum of the Saint Francis University Honors Program was revised three years ago to include a year-long learning community experience. First-year honors students now enroll in a course entitled The American College and a general education course during the fall semester, and another general education course linked with composition in the spring. Three instructors participate; one is involved both semesters.

Steadily increasing retention figures and a clearly tangible honors identity speak to the success of the curricular revision. The honors learning community has helped these highly motivated students to identify their peers who share similar academic preparation, seriousness of intent, adaptability to pedagogical change and a desire to be challenged.

Over 55 percent of the student body at Saint Francis is enrolled in pre-professional majors. A desire to increase effectiveness in meeting established institutional goals among these career-minded students drove the formation of enhanced learning communities for regular students. SFU is formally committed to cultivating responsible citizenship, fostering consideration of ethical questions, increasing engagement and helping students find meaningful connections among distinct disciplines for all members of our student population. These new learning communities for first-year students explore multiple academic perspectives of a contemporary social issue, linking classes in psychology, sociology, political science, biology, composition, speech and information literacy. Recent learning communities addressing earth stewardship and responsible citizenship enrolled students in a group of integrated courses, all connected to shared field trips, outside lectures, peer mentors, service learning projects and social and cultural programming such as student-faculty luncheons and arts events.

After a discussion of the developmental philosophy as well as the nuts and bolts of these two approaches, the presenters will help participants brainstorm how they might build a successful learning community at their university.

### **Stressing Benedictine Values to Welcome First-Year Students**

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Every first-year experience program must face the challenge of blending individuals with communities, work with leisure, and justice with mercy. These same challenges compelled Saint Benedict of Nursia, the patriarch of western monasticism, to compose The Rule of Saint Benedict, a book that provides the basic guidelines for monastic living. Though written 1,500 years ago, Benedict's Rule teaches contemporary First-Year Experience programs timely lessons for welcoming, stimulating, and supporting new members of a community. Still relevant is the Rule's promotion of a creative, cooperative, and constructive life/work arrangement that upholds the core values of Community, Care, Stewardship, and Hospitality. The virtue of Hospitality is most important and most relevant to First-Year Experience programs. By practicing Hospitality, we welcome "strangers" deferentially and respectfully and intensify our efforts to know, to orient, and to adapt to the "stranger," at the risk of reexamining our own needs. Hospitality nurtures individuals, but it counters individualism and promotes a community based on trust and truth. By practicing the virtue of Hospitality, First Year Experience programs foster an environment that welcomes all strangers, regardless of their special needs or cultural background. Saint Vincent College, which is run by Benedictine monks, has adapted and applied the Benedictine core values,

and especially Hospitality, in its First-Year Experience programs in fresh and instructive ways. Saint Vincent practices Benedictine hospitality in its Freshman-only dormitory and Seminar courses, and through its extracurricular programs and activities that stress Benedictine core values in both religious and secular contexts. Though the application at a Benedictine institutions may seem obvious, Benedictine core values can enrich any secular first year experience program.

### **Advancing Career Transitions: Delivering Age-Appropriate Career Development Services to Primary, Intermediate, and Secondary Students**

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By most measures, South Carolina ranks at or near the bottom in terms of high school drop out rates with percentages, depending on which study viewed, settling on the plus or minus side of 60 percent. In an attempt to address this issue the state passed, in 1994, the South Carolina School-to-Work Transition Act. A founding premise of this act was that each student should be exposed to career planning beginning in year 6 of his/her education (referred to in the states as middle school) in order to prepare for the world of work..

While considerable success has been realized as a result of the legislation (with several individual school programs receiving national recognition), the State Department, the business community, and the state's citizenry has clamored for stronger legislation with the ultimate goal of preparing more high school graduates who are ready to pursue higher education at the two or four year level. This call for action has resulted in the introduction of the Education and Economic Development Act which if passed, would attempt to accomplish the following: replace the current STWTA, reorganize curriculum around the national model of career clusters, retool educator preparation and professional development of educators, better connect primary, intermediate, and secondary schools, higher education and the workplace, revitalize career guidance and counseling, conduct research and assure accountability.

This presentation will address this change initiative from the perspectives of one who is directly involved, through his position at the State Department, in shaping and supporting the delivery of career guidance to the state's primary, intermediate, and secondary students as well as a university instructor who works with the "end product" of current services, namely first-year college students. By blending these perspectives, a model of how primary, intermediate, and secondary schools and higher education collaboration could yield students better prepared to pursue career development leading to more rewarding and satisfying lives (which would, in turn, contribute to the state's economic development) will be revealed.

## **Sharing the Vision for Tomorrow's Harvest: Innovation in the First College Year through Service Learning**

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Ideas proliferate in every college campus and every community—real issues to address and resolve, and real opportunities to make a difference: campus traffic, student apathy, environmental issues, and genuine needs such as community beautification; recreational resources for youth; services for elderly residents in the community; and needs for reading literacy. These are just a few of many reality-based classroom assignments that could easily be developed into service learning projects, thus giving students real purposes and real audiences for their learning. Real life issues awaiting study lie just outside the classroom and could make the college experience more meaningful and engaging. The value of reality-based learning has been firmly documented in research: it provides a common ground where diverse learners could interact effectively, narrows the gap between high-achieving and under-performing students, and bridges campus and home—homework and play. Longitudinal study on student attrition suggests that students need to feel a sense of belonging, and annual education reports have shown that not only is service learning a valued part of a student's educational process, but it also deepens the academic experience and expands life-long social awareness. This workshop focuses on sharing the vision, turning reality-based classroom assignments into community-based service learning projects that have the potential for sustainable partnerships that could easily progress from first-year and beyond. Participants will see examples of how first-year horticulture/agriculture students have planted seeds in the community through civic engagement and have reaped the “fruits of their labor.” Techniques for developing innovative and sustainable projects will be demonstrated. Guidelines for assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of projects will be presented along with strategies for developing community-based service-learning demonstration projects that encourage collaboration among faculty, student, and community members. Participants will have an opportunity to discuss the research findings based on model projects.

## **Supporting First-Year Students at School of Oriental and African Studies(SOAS)**

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The objective of this poster session is to showcase the innovative programme of support that has been developed for first year UG students at SOAS.

This session will briefly introduce SOAS, as an institution and its hugely international student body and provide details and visuals on the various ways of supporting students through widening participation and study support initiatives, some of which include:

#### Study skills workshops

These are taken by staff in the Learning and Teaching Unit and staff from the English Language Unit at SOAS. Subjects include essay writing, note-taking skills, time management and skills for learning languages. These workshops are optional and give students chance to ask questions in an informal setting and meet other students in the same boat as themselves.

#### One-to-one tutorials

These are taken by PhD students who have been carefully chosen and trained to provide first-year students with advice on essay and dissertation writing. SOAS has set-up a writing surgery with the help of these students, which would have otherwise been impossible, due to staff, timetable and budget restraints.

#### E-learning resources

Students are able to download helpsheets and access various websites and e-learning resources from the LTU website. Handouts from workshops are also available through this website to ensure accessibility for all.

#### Bridging Course

One of SOAS' key strengths is its diverse student body. There are a high proportion of mature students (around 40%) at SOAS, some of whom come from Access courses and many who have been away from any form of education for some time. At SOAS we recognise the importance of supporting mature students through this transition and provide a free week-long course designed to prepare students for university study.

The course also familiarises students with the facilities and support services available at SOAS, as well as giving them the chance to meet academics and other students.

### **Wish You Were Here: Attendance Monitoring as a Student Support Mechanism**

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From 2001 to 2003, the Learner Experience and Achievement Project (LEAP) conducted at Southampton Institute consistently demonstrated that students who regularly attend classes were more likely to enjoy their courses, feel socially and academically integrated, persist in their studies and get better grades (Lim 2004). These findings are also more widely reported in the recent literature (Moore 2003, Stanca, 2004).

Students did not attend for a variety of reasons ranging from illness to having to work in paid employment. Non-attendance could also be an indicator that things were not going well for the student, a sub-conscious 'cry for help'. We know from the research that students who did not attend were more likely to fall behind with their coursework, feel disengaged from the curriculum, get poorer grades, and in some cases, withdraw from their courses.

Yet, LEAP also consistently found that students who encountered problems did not always know who to approach for help and advice; or were reluctant to ask for help.

The issues arising from LEAP and other investigative initiatives within the Institute led to closer consideration of how we support our students and the systems we have in place to ensure this.

Within the Faculty of Technology, attendance monitoring was introduced as a tool for identifying possible 'at risk' students and then triggering appropriate and timely support.

This session will address the following areas:

- Research background and development
- Process
- Implementation and administration
- The student voice: student responses to the scheme
- Links between attendance and student persistence/performance

It will conclude by considering the value of attendance monitoring and its place in student support

systems. There will also be an opportunity at the end of the presentation for participants to share experiences from their own institutions.

## **Revolutionizing the First Year Experience Electronically**

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Freshman Seminar 101 has been offered at Southeastern Louisiana University since 1997 as an elective course providing three hours of graded academic credit. The current program replaced a one-hour course that had been in existence since 1987. Presently, approximately one-fourth of 2500 entering freshmen elect to enroll in a class limited to 25 students. The basic purpose of the course is to encourage student success through academic and social integration.

Grounded in the theories of Astin and Tinto, the basic goals are: (a) to improve student success as measured by retention and progression to the next grade level, (b) to ease the transition to the University by making students aware of University expectations, (c) to encourage the use of campus resources, (d) to develop academic skills, and (e) to increase student-student and student-faculty interaction. Strong longitudinal data supports the value of the course in student retention and progression to the next level, as well as increased student learning and study skills. History repeats itself! In addition to the three-hour elective course, a one-hour electronic course, using some basic concepts from the elective course was mandated Fall, 2003 for all incoming students.

Students who participate in the two-day summer orientation are required to complete the electronic course, delivered via Blackboard, during their first semester. In order to pass the course, students complete assignments using the University catalogue, the student handbook, and the webpage. They must also read faculty notes and Power Point presentations, participate in on-line discussions, and pass electronic quizzes. Finally, they are required to meet with faculty advisors, and although they are encouraged to attend various events on campus, they are required to attend a minimum.

This presentation will explain the development and implementation of the course. The presenter will also give examples of the syllabus, the learning units, and evaluation information.

## **Improving Attention and Concentration**

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This session will mimic the classroom activity so that participants will be able to use the exercise. Side discussions will allow participant comments and questions about the design elements. The session begins with participants discussing their sense of students' abilities regarding attention and concentration while the presenter acts as a scribe for audience input. Then the group will complete an activity that introduces brain-based learning. After participants provide feedback about the sensations (muscle memory) felt during the activity, the presenter delivers a lecturette to introduce a metaphor that provides a visual model for discussing and defining dendrites, disequilibrium, neurotransmitters, directive thinking, memory, attention, concentration and the effects of each on learning. Further lecture will detail the value of deep-structure learning as opposed to the shallow-structure learning practiced by many students and lay out a three-step study plan for guiding and improving attention. With a foundation laid for how brains build meaning and how universities build brain, the presenter will provide a list of thirty tools that students can use to improve focus and attentiveness and discuss ways to overcome distractions. Finally, the presenter discusses the effects of polyphasic thinking on general wellness and urges participants to investigate Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's concept of FLOW: The Psychology of Optimal Experience, which details the importance of making attention and actions one, and Martin Seligman's concept of learned helplessness, which inhibits authenticity, accountability and self efficacy. The session ends by opening up for questions and concerns regarding learning and/or attention. Then the presenter summarizes points about brain-based learning, concentration, attention, and wellness.

### **College Connections: A Mandatory Intervention Program for Academically Underprepared Students**

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The presentation begins by providing general information about Southern Utah University, our admissions process, and how SUU defines "at risk" students. The presentation then provides retention data for varying groups of SUU students as well as implications based on the assessment of developmental education, the First Year Seminar course, and past and current innovations that

proved effective in enhancing retention.

Presenters then discuss SUU's College Connections program and its design rationale, philosophy, and structure. Details concerning curriculum design, course activities and desired outcomes will be presented. The program has two components: a mandatory three week summer bridge program and a year-long learning community that begins at the same time as the bridge program. Presenters will introduce elements of a three credit-hour course, which is part of the summer program; the course is divided into thirds: developmental math, developmental reading & writing, and student success. Presenters will also detail the student activities in the learning community which include, but are not limited to, students living together on two themed floors in an SUU residence hall, students participating in activities designed to promote learning, and ongoing support for math, reading, and writing located in the residence hall. The three-week bridge program sets the stage for ongoing work through out the school year.

Presenters will discuss past and current innovations influencing the design of this program. Many of these innovations were modeled in a successful program designed by a TRIO organization at SUU. Finally, assessment information will be provided to illustrate how the assessment process informs the design.

### **Assessing and Evaluating the First-Year Seminar**

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This presentation will focus on the Assessment and Evaluation of the First Year Seminar Course at Southern Utah University. The primary focus will discuss the assessment instruments used to evaluate students' perspectives about their experiences while enrolled in the First Year Seminar course their first semester at SUU. Break down of data collected over the last three years will be compared and discussed in the presentation. Data that the students and faculty generated in regards to the FYS course will be presented to indicate the positive success people are experiencing with connecting to the university and other entities of the university. All assessment surveys and qualitative data will be presented and available for review in the presentation. The presenters will allow for time to address any questions that may be asked of them.

### **How to Establish Independent, Collaborative Scholarship in Learning Communities Through the Use of Case Studies**

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I will open with an Introduction to the Learning Community Concept. I will follow with an overview of Learning Communities that I have participated in and show what skills are essential for students. I will then progress to demonstrate how these skills can be addressed by the use of Case Studies from the Washington Center. I will bring several case studies, have the participant read a study, work in small groups to analyze the case study, have the participants report their findings. I will conclude by discussing resources available to those who would like to learn more about the case study concept and hold a question and answer session discussing the session and findings from our small group session. I will bring an annotated bibliography and www-links for additional materials.

## **7 Habits of Highly Effective College Students**

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The session will begin by defining a Habit, the interaction of knowledge (what to do), skill (how to do), and desire (want to do) and how the 7 Habits impact college students.

Habit 1: Being Proactive teaches students to take responsibility for their life, their choices and that they have the freedom to choose.

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind defines the mission statement and goals in life. In this habit, we will discuss that the mental creation precedes the physical creation.

Habit 3: Put First Things First helps students learn to prioritize and to put the most important things first. Effectiveness requires balancing important relationships, roles, and activities and those things that matter most should never be at the mercy of things that matter least.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win helps college students have an everyone-can-win attitude. By having an everyone-can-win attitude, students will learn that effective, long-term relationships require mutual benefits. We will discuss that better results in relationships come by cooperating interdependently rather than by competing independently and how to learn to seek the benefit of others as well as their own.

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand Before Being Understood teaches students to listen. When beginning a conversation assume that you don't fully understand and that you need to listen to what is being said and not being said. Understanding comes through listening. Empathic listening will be discussed.

Habit 6: Synergize means that working together takes time but produces better and long-term results. Synergy is everywhere. It is celebrating differences, teamwork, open-mindedness, and finding new and better ways to accomplish tasks.

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw is learning to take care of your greatest asset, yourself. In this habit we will discuss how to renew yourself regularly. Four dimensions will be discussed: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.

## **THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE WITH REFERENCE TO POST-APARTHEID DISADVANTAGED BLACK STUDENTS**

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The difficult transition from school to university is one of the greatest causes of the high drop-out figure among first-year students in South Africa as in other countries (Maxakato, 1999; Mushishi, 1997; Prins, 1991). For historically disadvantaged, and predominantly first-generation, black students the transition from school to a historically advantaged Afrikaans university presents an even more daunting challenge. Quite apart from having to adapt academically and socially, they also have to deal with the cultural adaptation (Troskie-de Bruin, 1999; Fraser, W.J. & R. Killen, 2003).

The University of Stellenbosch is a historically advantaged Afrikaans university with a unique character as a central role player in the history of apartheid in South Africa. Black students on this campus struggle with the challenges posed by the Language Policy, the distinctive institutional culture and inadequate financial support. Academically, too, black students struggle at this traditional university. Drop-out figures indicate that about 30% to 35% of the total first-year population at the University of Stellenbosch were unsuccessful. For black students the percentage of unsuccessful students was almost twice as high as for white students (Universiteit Stellenbosch, 2003).

For the past few years the Centre for Prospective Students has been focusing mainly on identifying, preparing and supporting especially black students from historically disadvantaged communities for successful transition from school to university.

In order to accomplish a successful transition for black students, the context of these students has to take into account academic backlogs as well as their social adaptation. In this paper the presenters will discuss the challenges in the recruitment of black first-generation students with reference specifically to their educationally disadvantaged background. The submission will also address the challenges stemming from the academic, social and cultural adaptation to a historically advantaged Afrikaans university.

Finally, the paper outlines the academic support available in order to ensure the successful transition of first-generation black students.

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### **What Did They Learn?: An Assessment of skills for First-Year Students**

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The Student Success Seminar course is designed to meet the needs of students transitioning to higher education. This course promotes student involvement and active learning. Research indicates that active student involvement in the learning process is a factor that is strongly associated with student retention, i.e., persistence to course and degree completion (Astin, 1993). This research study focuses on the impact of the Student Success Seminars at a selected publicly assisted metropolitan institution in the mid-western region of the United States of America. This poster session details the research project and describes the data gathered from the assessment. The information will assist with the following information for the course:

- 1) Discover possible reasons for the gains and losses;
- 2) Adjust the course syllabi to meet the needs of the students based on results;
- 3) Pay attention to our student population. Do some students need more concentration on the “soft” skills before they can be successful in the “hard” skills? Is the reverse also true? How do we identify those students?;
- 4) Assess the textbook in entirety;
- 5) Assess each chapter individually;
- 6) Allow instructors to compare their results on several levels, such as: individual students, individual sections, and student types.

The preliminary findings of the achievement/retention study suggest that this course has become increasingly effective. For the Fall 2004 semester, overall, 79% of the students in the courses received a grade of “C” or higher, with 40% of those students receiving the grade of “A”. This information will direct us to see if the students are getting satisfactory grades and finishing the course, but in relation to retention efforts, we will better ascertain if the students actually know

about the skills necessary for success in college.

## **Beyond Serendipity: Developing Retention Strategies to Improve the Student Experience**

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The University of Auckland inaugurated a “Uni-guide” scheme in 2004, with the intention of assisting first-time students to adapt to campus life, and to reduce the dropout rate. By mobilising peer mentors, the University’s intake and orientation programmes underpin retention initiatives and ensure exposure to appropriately developed student support systems.

The programme has exceeded expectations. The dropout rate for first-time students decreased by almost 50%. Even more impressive is the fact that less than one percent of students who participated in the Uni-guide programme in 2004, dropped out after one semester.

Consequently, the University has developed a transition strategy for an integrated and coordinated approach to achieve greater retention rates through the provision of a transition service for new students, and greater support for existing students, further promoting retention. This strategy involves the extension and enhancement of the levels of support provided by the University for students, and reflects the recognition that both breadth and depth of service is a fundamental necessity if the University of Auckland is to maximise the value of (and for) its student population.

The strategy combines several departments into one organisational unit, creating an easily identifiable and accessible single service arena for new (and existing) students. Through a well-structured and coordinated approach to developing the new department, organisational benefits are already accruing in the form of increased cooperation and communication amongst staff, and a more concentrated programme attuned to the delivery of improved services to the student body. Longitudinal studies of initial participants, and ongoing research into student expectations have already yielded benefits in addition to what may have described as the serendipitous results to date.

The paper will review the strategy, discuss operational aspects of the strategy, and review several intake cohorts from a variety of perspectives including retention, integration, transition and institutional transformation.

## **A Great Connection: Service-Learning and the First-Year Experience**

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At Tusculum, service is an integral part of the curriculum. All students have the opportunity for practical experience outside the classroom and a charge to serve the community. Students acquire valuable skills in areas, such as leadership, collective decision making, communication, working in groups, and public problem solving. Most importantly, students gain knowledge of their ability to work together in order to make a difference. The first course all freshmen must take is Entitled, "Extended Freshman Orientation," with one outcome focusing on an examination of the inter-connectedness of their roles as citizens in immediate communities. A service project is part of the first-year experience. The mission of the Center for Civic Advancement is dedicated to effecting positive change by promoting social responsibility, social justice and equity through civic engagement and service and learning partnerships involving students, campus and community.

The CCA implements an extensive campus-wide Service Day experience, called "Nettie Day." First-time freshmen are involved in this experience for one day in which no formal classes are held. One of the outstanding components of this experience is community workshops held during the summer to match the needs of the community with student availability. The main purpose is to provide a means for community leaders to discuss student learning outcomes from service learning and for our administrators to assist in meeting those needs. This institutional initiative session will describe the types of agencies involved, community workshops, community-based research (census gathering), logistical management, and assessment of this experience. For more information about the Center for Civic Advancement, visit our website at [www.tusculum.edu/caa/servicelearning.html](http://www.tusculum.edu/caa/servicelearning.html).

### **When Two Worlds Connect - Student Affairs and College of Business Serving First-Year Students**

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At the University of Arkansas, the Division of Student Affairs provides programs and services that help new students become:

\* more self-aware

\* strongly bonded to the University

\* intellectually engaged

The Career Development Center has developed programs, in collaboration with Academic Affairs, to positively affect the learning experiences of first year students' at the University of Arkansas.

3 initiatives have resulted:

1. classroom presentations - presenting career decision-making models to F-Y students in First-Year Experience Classes and in a Career Decision-Making Class.
2. individual advising. The "Freshman 15" was introduced to new students as a "15 minute conversation" with a career advisor to acquaint students with programs and services offered by the Career Center. It is an opportunity for new students to become acquainted with a staff member outside the classroom or residence hall.
3. Professional Development Institute. Beginning spring 2005, First-Year Students will be encouraged to engage in a comprehensive Career Training & Development Program to include assessments, individual career coaching, instruction, and experiential activities.

In 1999, the University of Arkansas Career Development Center expanded and formed a satellite office in the Sam M. Walton College of Business. In addition to providing stronger connections with the corporate community, this expansion has allowed Career Center staff to engage with faculty for enhanced programs for first-year students.

Career Development Center staff participates in all New Student Orientation sessions and play an active role in a first-year student experiential camp (held before school starts).

Integral to first-year students' curriculum is the expectation that they will:

\* clarify career planning goals through coursework, advising & experiential education;

\* learn how to make career decisions using resources and reflecting on experiences.

### **Welcome to the Rural Roadshow**

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Lou Benson

This presentation will focus on two major transitional initiatives implemented at the University of Ballarat (UoB), Australia. A large percentage of students who come to the UoB are often the first in their family to pursue a tertiary education and must leave the comforts of home to do so. Where transition starts and ends at UoB is continually widening. Therefore, the first initiative has been for staff to travel into isolated rural areas to conduct information sharing sessions prior to students leaving their communities. When students arrive on campus, they become part of the second transition initiative; a Faculty/Student Services mentor program that sees 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students employed to mentor all first year students. The uniqueness of this program is in the university wide application and the collaboration between School First Year Coordinators and Student Services. Both programs are part of a university wide transition program that is going beyond 'one size fits' all type programs and reaching further into the diverse student population at UoB.

This session will have two structured components including a powerpoint presentation and a information sharing session. The powerpoint presentation will encompass:

- An insight into the University of Ballarat unique transition incentives;
- The background to developing both the community based information sessions along with the university wide mentoring program;
- What evolved; (rural area tours to a two day mentor training conference)
- Problematic struggles of coordinating a university wide mentor program involving over 100 mentors and 1300 first year students;
- How support was raised for the ventures;
- A shared insight into lessons learnt from both programs;
- Results of the program.

Component two will encourage participants to share their experiences and raise questions associated with UoB unique transitional programs.

All participants will receive a copy of our Student Mentor Handbook and other supporting publications from these programs.

### **The Student Experience of the Transition to University**

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Previous research has shown that the student experience during the first few weeks of university plays a crucial role in student retention. In this conference session we draw on qualitative interview data with 35 students who completed their first year and 28 who withdrew. We follow these students through the early stages of their university career, from the decision to enter higher education to the end of their first term at university. In our findings we explore the similarities and differences between the experience of those who stayed on the course and those who left. Our aims are to contribute to understanding factors that lead to early withdrawal and to identify ways in which institutions can help students to overcome problems they encounter in the early stages of their university careers.

Our data reveal that the phases of the early higher education career in which students experience most difficulty are: the process of applying to university; establishing new social networks when they arrive; adjusting to a new style of learning and teaching. At each of these stages students' motivation to engage with higher education is affected by external factors; for example teachers and parents influenced some students' decision-making processes and poor motivation to study was more often a result of students' misunderstanding of what was required, or not having the necessary study skills, rather than lack of interest in the subject matter. Whilst student motivation is frequently analysed from a psychological perspective our findings suggest an understanding of motivation also requires sociological analysis of the structural and material contributory factors.

### **Text Messaging: Making Contact with Students on their Territory**

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Establishing a reliable means of contact with students is now becoming an increasingly difficult affair. First year undergraduates are using many different forms of communication media to make contact with each other. They can easily traverse the different channels of electronic media from email to mobile phone text message in a way which is difficult for university departments to keep track of. However, mobile phones, and SMS text messaging in particular, have become an ever present mediator of students' social lives. They represent a reasonably stable form of contact in the transient life of a student. However, universities have made relatively little use of this medium.

Establishing supportive relationships with other students and university staff has been shown to be pivotal to student retention. Retention initiatives and research undertaken at the University of Brighton have focused on the importance of the social environment in the first year of study. By engaging with SMS text messaging as a means of contacting students we have been able to make contact with those who would otherwise be invisible to the university. In addition it has allowed us a level of informality which was not been apparent through other media.

The ability to send text messages from a desktop computer was made possible by a computer program called Student Messenger. Although this has been developed with student retention in mind, appropriate use of such a program is dependent upon the approaches of the staff using it. Some of the obstacles to its successful application will be discussed.

**Attitudes Towards Learning in First Year Biology**

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The students that are accepted to this large Canadian university arrive with assumptions about their own academic abilities in addition to a set of learning skills that have contributed to their high school success. When faced with the challenges of learning in a university environment many find that their old approaches are no longer effective. For teaching faculty that deal with first-year students, discovering means to facilitate a transition to self-regulated learning (Butler and Winnie, 1995) is paramount.

A collaborative research project was undertaken to investigate the changes in the attitudes and approaches to learning of first-year Biology students at the University of British Columbia. A specially designed survey tool was administered at the beginning of term and before the end of term. The survey was completed by students in large lecture classes and was designed to identify shifts in self-regulated and deeper learning. The responses of students taking a laboratory course with small class size and a problem-solving based curriculum designed to enhance self-regulated and deeper learning were compared with student profiles of those without the benefit of this experience. Further evidence of changes in student attitudes were identified using course evaluations and focus group transcripts.

Evidence from the three assessment tools indicated that a course that has many of the “Principles For Good Practice”(Chickering and Gamson, 1987) can impact the attitude and approaches of students to learning and ease the transition to deeper learning in their first year.

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#### **Diversity, Millennial Style: Are We Really Ready?**

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Racial and ethnic diversity, while complex and continuously challenging for higher education, is nonetheless familiar territory. But as we meet a new generation of students, we do so in the midst of a newly sprawling appeal to diversity inclusive of religion, national identity, gender, race, class, and ethnicity. These new dimensions of diversity, always present but more pronounced and provocative in the wake of 9/11 and other global events, challenge us to balance academic priorities with increasingly complex and far-reaching socio-political pressures. And they challenge our students, particularly our freshmen, in making an already complex adjustment to the culture of higher education. As diversity becomes more explicitly connected to national identity, religious beliefs, and global politics, the intellectual and social development of our students is less remote from the “real world” in ways that present both opportunities and challenges for us and for them.

How do we best prepare our first year students for this new campus environment and help them adjust to a campus culture (cultures?) that is decidedly less insulated from the “real world”? Should we be insulating our students from academic and political conflicts? How are students themselves shaping campus culture? How do we help students negotiate the same issues we find ourselves struggling with, and how do we balance academic and social priorities to best serve our students? What, if any, are the curricular implications of these new dimensions of diversity? Can we be proactive, rather than reactive, in framing issues of identity and diversity in a post 9/11 environment? What can we learn from those working in different national and higher education environments?

We present this discussion in a roundtable format to invite engagement by anyone facing, responding to, or interested in these new twists on a long-standing challenge.

### **Retention Initiatives in a State-Supported University: Vision, Issues, Programs**

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The program includes specific details and guidance on establishing retention programs which focus on the first year experience. Responsibilities for providing leadership for the First-Year Experience Program were an initial concern. Administrative actions and responses were crucial for initial program success. Addressed carefully were plans for extending the vision: recruitment, retention, and graduation rates.

Support from the administration allowed the creation of the Division of Undergraduate Studies. The program will emphasize and describe the steps taken to involve faculty and the college deans

in awareness and planning sessions and to establish a cadre of faculty to build support. The following program initiatives were established: (1) University Center for Academic Success (1994); (2) Clustered Learning Program (1995); (3) Academic Advising Center (1996); (4) Hughes Residential College (1997); (5) State Residential College and Summer Reading Program (1999); (6) Teaching with Technology (2000); (7) Freshman Interest Groups (FIG) and Freshman Convocation (2001); (8) University College (2002); (9) First-Year Experience Course (2003); (10) Minton Residential College and Unlocking College Academics Now (UCAN) Program (2004); (11) Sophomore Year Experience (2005).

The program will provide information on the following actions and decisions of the administration which positively affected the recruitment and retention of students:

1. Campus Beautification: A campaign for extensive improvement of campus grounds was initiated.
2. Scholarship Funds: Scholarship budgets for incoming freshman and returning students were increased.
3. Admission Standards: Required standardized test scores and high school grade point averages were raised for admission.
4. Faculty Recruitment: Faculty were hired with outstanding credentials and from prestigious universities.
5. Comprehensive University: New colleges were formed as health fields grew, science and math areas increased, business degrees expanded, and teacher education programs remained strong.
6. Tier II University: National recognition as a Tier II University brought additional prestige to the university.
7. Property Acquisition: A master plan was developed for acquisition of property surrounding the UCA campus.
8. Publicity Campaign: A marketing campaign was initiated to recruit students and provide Arkansans with information about UCA.

## **Student Withdrawal**

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In recent HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) statistics the University of Glasgow is shown to be performing at the top of the Russell Group in terms of participation of under-represented

groups in Higher Education (2001-02, 2002-03). However, in comparison, for non-continuation following year of entry performance indicator, the University of Glasgow has the poorest percentage of students not in Higher Education in their second year of study. In order to influence why a student drops out of university it is important to understand the reasons students give for withdrawal and whether the university could influence this decision making. The research was in two parts. First, all withdrawal forms submitted to Registry were entered onto excel and information contained was analyzed. It must be noted that information given was patchy and inconsistent and therefore a second phase of the study was conducted. Students were contacted in January 2005 and asked to complete a survey questionnaire (modified Yorke 1999 questionnaire) to further identify factors associated with withdrawal and assess students' perception of university role in withdrawal. Some early indicators of the research suggest that students were more likely to withdraw during October, November and January. Many students provided qualitative reasons for withdrawing from university. These reasons were thematically coded under 5 headings: personal; health; financial; academic and; other. For example, academic reasons mentioned by students included that they had either chosen the wrong course or they were not enjoying their course.

Choosing the wrong course for many meant that the course was not what they expected or they realized it was not going to lead them into a chosen career. No student mentioned academic failure. The second phase of the research revealed that many students had returned to higher education since their initial withdrawal during academic year 2004/2005. The poster presentation will outline findings from both phases of the research.

### **Personal Development for Successful Learning: Working Together Across the Disciplines**

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This session will look at the structure, design and delivery of the Personal Development for Successful Learning course including the use of student feedback and evaluation to support course enhancement. We will discuss the use of creative engagement with students to develop interest in their own learning development to become independent learners. In addition this session will examine the ways in which this successful, voluntary programme is informing student development and skills strategies at different levels of the University and the ways in which this initiative interacts with other areas of the University and adds to the community of learning and student engagement that is a key part of our ongoing institutional development.

## **University of Maryland Academic Achievement Programs: A Model for Student Persistence**

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This presentation will begin by describing the unique financial and organizational structure of the University of Maryland Academic Achievement Program's (AAP) first year experience program for at-risk students. Through a creative mix of state and federal financial support, this program provides a comprehensive and aggressive set of services designed to improve retention of first year students from low-income and/or first generation backgrounds. The second section of this presentation discusses the first year experience curriculum for the AAP student. The curriculum includes supplemental instruction, tutoring, counseling and required personal and cultural development program activities. Recognizing that unmet financial need can be a major barrier to access and persistence for low-income and first generation students, the AAP program also includes financial support for at-risk students. The presentation discusses the challenges and successes the AAP program has experienced with regard to the financial support component of the program. The presentation concludes by describing the quantitative and qualitative assessment data that document the success of this program in terms of student persistence, personal development and graduation rates.

## **Ten Year Trends in the First Year Experience: Lessons from Down Under**

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There is much discussion of the changing experience of university students in the 21st century, but what is changing and what are the implications? This presentation focuses on a recent national study of the first year experience in Australian universities. It is the third national study of its kind, yielding landmark ten-year trend data which provides empirical evidence of the nature of the changing student experience in the first year. The study takes place at a time of significant change in the Australian higher education sector. There are notable changes in federal funding policies, particularly for undergraduate domestic students; and international student enrolments have increased threefold over the past decade. In addition, increased attention is being given to strategies

for enhancing access and participation, particularly for students from equity groups. In this context, the national first year study is particularly instructive for the national level trend data it provides on the experience of students from a range of backgrounds.

A total of 2344 responses were received from commencing undergraduate students in nine Australian universities. Students reported on their expectations, goals and study habits in the first year, along with their views on the quality of teaching and perceptions about the success with which they had made the transition to university life and study.

The presentation will provide details of ten-year trends and changes in first students' time commitments during a typical university week. It will highlight issues of engagement and the role of information and communication technologies in the first year experience. In particular, attention will be given to the role of technologies in the ways first year students engage with peers, faculty, and the learning experience. The presentation will also explore the experiences of students from demographic subgroups. It will conclude with implications for supporting students in their first year and will illuminate relevant policy issues.

## **Bringing in the Faculty**

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Faculty at large research institutions, as a group, are often the last to jump on board any new teaching project or program that calls for change or a shift in their work. This is not because they do not care, but because their work has many dimensions and changing how one teaches is very difficult. At the University of Minnesota, we have been working on a number of projects that will positively impact the teaching of our first year students.

This past summer, we developed and distributed two booklets to faculty teaching first year students: *Teaching Freshman Seminars: A faculty handbook*; and *Teaching First Year Students: Best practices at the University of Minnesota*. The response by the faculty and administration to these two resources has been overwhelmingly positive.

In fall 2002, we also began hosting a conference, *Focusing on the First Year*, for faculty and academic staff to share and learn from each other various strategies in teaching, advising, and supporting first year students. We begin the conference with a keynote speaker whose name would be recognized by faculty. In 2002 we had Vincent Tinto and in 2004 we had Richard Light. Both Tinto and Light spent the day with the attendees to talk individually with them, answer questions, and address specific issues.

This session will address the process in gathering the information for the booklets, how they are used, and future directions. We will also discuss issues of hosting an on campus conference, share conference materials, and review the benefits to the faculty of such a conference.

## **GPA's and BAC's: Two Sides of a Single Coin**

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The goal of this session is to examine the impact of high risk behaviors on academic performance. The genesis of this program was an indepth examination of student attitudes regarding alcohol and its use, followed by several attempts to reduce high risk drinking. Although these efforts had some level of success, they did not succeed to the level of researchers hoped. What followed was a series of conversations with students regarding behaviors at parties and in other social situations. This information generated our interest in knowing more. Simultaneously, the book "I am Charlotte Simmons" came to our attention. Reading groups of first year men and women were formed for discussion. Additionally, faculty and staff groups were formed. We will begin by sharing our experience with these groups and then ask others to share their observations, ideas, reactions and potential plans.

## **Peer Mentoring Programs at the University of New South Wales**

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A small number of pilot Peer Mentoring Programs were introduced at the University of New South Wales in 2001 with the aim of enhancing learning and teaching and improving student retention. These pilot programs were evaluated and the results suggested that peer mentoring had positive outcomes for students participating as mentors and first year students participating as mentees. As a result of these initial findings and literature (Jacobi, 1991, Elliot, 1994, Hall 2003, Hall, 2000), which supports the benefits of peer mentoring, twenty-seven mentoring programs have been developed at UNSW since 2001.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of peer mentoring is an ongoing priority at UNSW. Evaluations of mentoring programs have been criticized (Rodger & Tremblay 2003, Jacobi 1991) for methodological weaknesses and limiting findings to anecdotal reports. As well as this, there is little evidence in the literature to suggest peer mentoring in a University context is effective or has an impact on retention. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to extend a study undertaken by Hall (2004), which examined the effectiveness of two mentoring programs, implemented at UNSW in 2003. This study aims to extend the study undertaken by Hall (2004) by examining the effectiveness of fourteen of the twenty-seven mentoring programs at UNSW. Specifically, this study aims to examine the effect of peer mentoring on first year transition, belonging and retention, to highlight peer mentoring as an effective strategy for mentor skill development and to gain information to improve the effectiveness of across campus mentoring programs in the future. Overall, the aim is to make a positive contribution to research on peer mentoring in a university setting.

Questionnaires were distributed to mentors and mentees. Four hundred and thirty eight mentee questionnaires were returned and one hundred and forty six mentor questionnaires were returned. The main findings for mentees indicated a positive relationship between level of program use and measures of effectiveness (i.e self rated success in transition, sense of belonging, decision to discontinue or defer). The results indicated use of the mentoring programs positively affected student retention. The findings indicated that the mentoring programs were effective in helping students manage common transition issues (e.g. making friends, finding their way around). The results suggested that the relationship between mentor and mentee is more important than the content of the mentoring program.

The main findings for mentors indicated that involvement in the mentoring programs had a positive impact on skill (e.g. communication, social) development.

The evaluations provided valuable information about the problems faced by mentors and mentees, which enabled changes to be made for the implementation of 2005 mentoring programs at UNSW. The impact of these changes will be reported.

### **Summer Reading Programs: Designing a “Leading Edge” Program as a Means of Fostering Student Retention and Learning**

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Joe Cuseo (in press) argues that a summer reading program for new college students stimulates multiple, common conversations, which in turn, results in higher levels of active involvement (Astin, 1984, 1985) and social integration (Tinto, 1975, 1993), which are two key theoretical principles of student retention and learning. Multiple conversations can increase the amount of student time and level of involvement invested in the learning experience (active involvement), and common conversation promotes student interaction with other members of the college community serving to connect students and strengthening their sense of community membership (social integration) (Cuseo).

In 1999, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill began implementing a summer reading program for all new undergraduates as a means to enhance new students' participation in the campus' intellectual climate (active involvement) and to increase a sense of community amongst students, faculty, and staff (social integration). Evaluations indicate that this program has transformed the campus with an enhanced intellectual climate, a re-commitment to academic freedom and to critical/diverse thinking, and a stronger sense of community through the common experience of a summer reading program. As noted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and in other media, this program has drawn national and international attention as a result of some book selections perceived to be controversial.

This session will include a brief review of literature on the benefits of summer reading programs. Participants will learn elements of a well-developed program; identify important constituents to include in program planning, implementation and evaluation for a successful collaborative effort between academic and student affairs; understand a program structure that promotes institutional-wide commitment; learn how to work with media when the book selection is controversial; learn ways of marketing the reading program to new students and ways to tie the summer reading program into other campus programs.

### **Educating the "Whole" Student: Implications for Freshman Programs**

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A major consideration in developing programs for first-year students is how to balance what the institution has traditionally wanted students to get from their education and what recent research shows students may need from their education. One scenario is that which Alexander Astin described in his Keynote Address at the 2005 Annual Conference on the First-Year Experience: the discrepancy between the academy's focus on exterior values of student GPAs and retention and the lack of focus on or attention to the "inner" life of students, which includes "the development of qualities such as social responsibility, empathy, and spirituality."

But issues abound concerning an institutional shift from the traditional focus on the externals of education to the internal. How can such qualities as social responsibility, empathy and spirituality be integrated into the curriculum of a large secular institution? What's at stake for institutions of higher learning when they attempt to introduce questions and arrive at answers about the individual's search for meaning? How do we determine a set of shared values that should be communicated to students and the faculty who teach them without the danger of imposition?

With the recent implementation of academic Learning Communities (LC) in the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh, we believe we have found one way to move towards addressing these questions and achieving a balance of agendas. Within the one credit Introduction to the Arts and Sciences course at the heart of each thematic Learning Community cluster of courses is a curriculum that emphasizes connection, civility and ethics. As students are actually experiencing the Learning Community cluster of courses and seeing how the different disciplines interrelate, the Introduction to the Arts and Sciences course curriculum initiates discussions on the values and the meaning of their education and life goals.

### **Skinheads, Lintheads, and the Smallest Who in Whoville: A First-Year Writing Class on Community**

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In the fall of 2004, I taught a first-year writing course centered on the idea of community, hoping in part to see how students could begin to think critically about community formation as they themselves were in the process of entering, creating, and testing various forms of community. The course emphasized the idea of the classroom as learning community and included a service-learning component in the course. The critical issue in introducing first-year students to the idea of community was making them aware of not only how communities form but also the various ways they are fractured by individualism, power, and difference. Negotiating cultural difference is central to student success, tied to an ability to engage in larger conversations in which one's own values (usually tied to one's community of origin) are at stake. We began with a children's book that foregrounds the importance of hearing minority voices (not speaking FOR them, but listening to them). We looked at texts about class division in England and in South Carolina, the

“skinheads” of Leeds and the “lintheads” of the Carolina textile mills (introducing many SC students to history they didn't know). Our final unit was built around the recent British novel *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*, which the death of a young man in a neighborhood of immigrants and students is contrasted with the media obsession with the death of Princess Diana. In this workshop, I will offer a survey of the pedagogical framework of the course. I will offer examples and bibliographies of texts and films I found especially useful. I will also demonstrate some of the creative and non-traditional exercises I used, both group work and individual: a show and tell structured as "an archeology of the present," poems about food, a memoir "mapping" a community.

## **Integrating Students into the Academic, Social, and Cultural Context of their University or College**

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Increasing numbers of international students are entering UK Higher Education institutions. The challenge of adjusting to the new environment for these students usually includes issues of culture, language, homesickness, and independence, some of which also affect home students. However, it is also often the case that the educational system of the country of origin is very different to the UK system, so it is necessary to offer supportive interventions on both an academic and a social level. These interventions must be in place in the first year if the students are to successfully adjust socially and academically to be able to fully engage with the learning process. Moreover it is important that home and international students integrate, so providing inclusive mechanisms and frameworks is a vital part of the student orientation process. At the University of Sunderland's School of Computing and Technology, several initiatives have taken place recently and this presentation will describe each in turn: from the weekly International Student Forum which helps students understand what is expected of them in a western HE context, to the International Students into Schools project which gives students and local children the opportunity to work together to gain an understanding of each other's culture and promote racial tolerance in the region; to two mechanisms for drawing all students together, namely Happy Families and the Sunderland Language And News Group (SLANG). Happy Families provides new students with a support network of peers, with level three student 'grandparents', level two 'parents', and level one 'children' who are the major recipients of the support. SLANG is the most recent development in our suite of interventions and is a social forum, meeting at weekends, which is also a means for international (and UK) students to improve their language and communication skills and cultural awareness.

## **The 8 Strand Approach to Induction**

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My presentation will demonstrate the challenges I faced in developing a coherent, friendly, minimally bureaucratic and university wide induction process which Faculty and support staff across the University believed would improve the experience of the new student but not dramatically increase their workloads. I will provide practical advice and ideas to session attendees which they can adapt to meet the needs of their university.

The session will show how I developed and implemented a number of new major interlinking initiatives with the centre piece being the development of the 8 Strand Approach. The Approach encompasses good external practice, which can be moulded to suit any type of student, and it reflects what our students told us they felt was important. It was designed to ensure that all students received a similar induction experience whilst providing the flexibility for schools and departments to add activities unique to them. The Approach is adaptable for any structure or type of student.

## **Non-Mentoring Peer Support and the First-Year Experience**

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Reasons for student withdrawal are multifactorial, and at the University of Teesside its retention strategies (RS) are designed to address the modifiable attrition risk factors. Good retention management and student support can benefit all students. At Teesside RS aim to promote a University /School identity and tradition. Core to these RS was the need to provide good communication and support for first year students. In SSSL this was supplemented by the 'Student Links' projects which is designed to offer informal (non-mentoring) support and advice to first year students. The 'Links' are co-ordinated by a Student Advisor who is a member of non-academic staff. The 'Links Advisors' comprise a group of 3rd year students who have excellent communication skills and are committed to assisting first year students, and operate via a drop-in centre. The 'Links' received training during the pre-Welcome week. New first year students were made aware of the system by poster advertising and through information provided during the 'Welcome Week' and during lectures in week one.

In addition to offering immediate practical support to any student with a problem, the 'Links Advisors' also:

- Where appropriate, direct a student to the optimum source of support and advice.
- Support Welcome Week and Induction activities.
- Host social events designed to promote cohort identity
- Act as leaders for campus tours.

The 'Links' project was piloted during the 2003/04 academic year in the School of Social Sciences & Law (SSS&L). Following its evaluation it was revised in order to further embed it over the next couple of years. Teesside Business School decided to adopt the system following its initial success in SSS&L.

The RS and Links project has since expanded to include 2nd and 3rd year experiences, and even the post-graduate experience, to promote academic attainment.

### **Foundation Degrees: Unique Students, Unique Needs?**

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Higher Education Institutions are increasingly being called upon to work in partnership with employers to develop new forms of flexible, work focused qualifications and the Foundation Degree provides a framework that encompasses this development. The foundation degree programmes within the School of Health and Social Care at the University of Teesside, seek to improve the qualifications of healthcare support staff by strengthening and modernising their training.

To date, 3 cohorts have commenced the programme and one cohort has graduated. The presentation will contain statistics of entry and exit profiles and show that a new kind of student is being attracted to higher education, which in turn is producing a new kind of worker.

The presentation will outline the lessons Teesside University has learnt

- Many of the students have had little experience of formal education since leaving school and struggle with the notion of self directed study or how to use 'free' time profitably.
- Many of the students had a negative experience of formal education and 'old' emotions may resurface at critical times on their programme.

- Teaching methods have had to change to encompass their experiences. For example, students may have little knowledge of IT or study skills.
- The students struggle to ask for help or assistance as this is seen as a sign of ‘weakness’.
- The importance of preparing the students for HE level study

The presentation will also review the positive elements of the our experience

- The enthusiasm demonstrated by the students who grasp the opportunity to embark on higher education.
- The contribution the students themselves have made to the development of the programme
- The approach to learning adopted by the students, which is very task focused.

### **Pacific Freshman Mentor Seminar Series**

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The Mentor Seminar Series of the University of the Pacific is one of the most unique general education programs in the United States. One of only a handful of common syllabus, two semester required general education courses in the country, the sequence of three linked seminar courses (Mentor I, II and III) is required of all non-transfer freshman students regardless of major including students majoring in one of the undergraduate professional degree programs in business, music, education, engineering, and international studies.

Freshmen begin in the fall of the year by enrolling in one of approximately 40 sections of Mentor I, all of which focus on a five timeless questions. Students read from a faculty- created anthology of readings on these questions, and the perspectives of the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and visual and performing arts are applied to them. The course is discussion-oriented, and students write several analytical essays and give presentations. In the Mentor II course taken in the second semester, students form groups and choose a contemporary public policy issue to research and propose solutions, such as on affirmative action, poverty, and the state of the natural environment. Students write a group policy paper and give oral presentations, which culminate in an all-section debate competition. The Mentor III seminar, taken during the senior year, focuses on students’ moral development and the identification and evaluation of different ethical theories and theories of moral development. Students also read a biography of a celebrated person and write

their own moral autobiography.

The presenters will (1) trace the development of the program, now over a decade old, emphasizing the importance of faculty participation and institutional perspective; (2) describe the challenges and strategies related to assessing student learning in the program, (3) describe the process now underway to reinvent the program in order to create a more unified thematic approach with both breadth and depth and that directly reflects the goals of the general education program, to develop a more comprehensive assessment approach, and to reengage a new generation of faculty.

## **Enabling Achievement**

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The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL): Enabling Achievement within a Diverse Student Body – University of Wolverhampton

In January 2005 the University of Wolverhampton was one of only 54 UK HE institutions granted a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). Wolverhampton's area of excellence is in Enabling Achievement within a Diverse Student Body. The University has the highest percentage of students historically under-represented in HE in the UK and is nationally recognised for widening participation. The interdisciplinary CETL aims to improve retention, progression and achievement for first year students.

This presentation will:

- ? Share the excellence demonstrated by Wolverhampton that has won it this award.
- ? Demonstrate a variety of methods, 'tools' and strategies used for identification and support for individuals at level 1 in identified areas:
  - ? how excellent student outcomes are achieved through the use of diagnostics and tracking to identify and support learner needs,
  - ? the development of specific learning skills
  - ? embedding this work within the subject curriculum
  - ? the use of technology blended together with other forms of support for students.
- ? Discuss how the CETL will integrate this excellent work into guides, the virtual learning

environment and use an e-portfolio to enhance personal development and planning whilst fully exploiting cutting edge communications technology.

? Finally explore how this work can provide a framework of support and guidance to others working in this area

In this presentation delegates will be given copies of materials and 'tools' that the University's uses with its students, for example the Individual Learning Profile and induction materials.

## **Coaching and Study Skills: Improving Retention of Engineering and Science Students**

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Uppsala University is an old university with a long research tradition; yearly it accepts 800 new students to engineering and natural science programmes. The new students are typically, 20-21 year-old males with highly educated parents. In Sweden, as in many other countries, the interest for higher education in science and technology is declining. Moreover, certain programmes have a 20 % dropout rate during the first year.

To mitigate this situation we introduced coaching to ease the transition into higher education. The term coaching comes from sports, the objective is somewhat similar, and the coach is the academic counsellor for an educational programme.

The coach:

- Supports and encourages students much more actively than a traditional counsellor in the classroom and individually
- Helps the students to find their way into the organisation
- Has an introductory programme and organises activities
- Supplies information to the students when it is asked for

Coaching started during 2003-04 with 80 students and 3 coaches, working in groups of 20 students at a time.

Students generally appreciated coaching, especially those with a non-traditional background. The dropout rate decreased to a level lower than on comparable programmes.

Coaching is now offered to all new technology and some science students.

This year coaching has been complemented with a new course in study skills integrated with a science or technology course, so far attended by approximately 100 students. To gain academic credits, “active participation” in all parts of the course was compulsory. The coach was teacher on the course in cooperation with the “ordinary” lecturer to give continuity in the student contact.

The study skills course was highly appreciated by the students, and the effect on students’ success will be presented at the conference.

### **The Honors Onramp: A First-Year Experience Tailored to the High Ability Student**

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“Relatively little has been written about retention of honors students. Yet anecdotal evidence suggests that they, as much as ‘nontraditional’ students, have special needs which go unattended in most college settings,” (Vincent Tinto, *Leaving College*, 1993). Early analysis revealed that 25% of high-achieving students were not returning to Utah State University. In 2003, we began a three-pronged first-year experience to increase the retention and ultimate success of these high-ability students. The three steps comprise Honors Connections before fall semester begins; two courses during fall semester called A Taste of Honors; and Honors Inquiry in the second semester. This approach has increased Honors retention and participation and the level of interest in prestige fellowships.

Students who participate in Honors Connections are more likely to apply and be accepted into the Honors Program (83% opposed to 58% of those not participating). The week before school begins, Honors Connections lays the groundwork for the transition to college and provides information on what it means to be an Honors student.

For the fall semester, Honors students are also enrolled in A Taste of Honors, composed of Scholars Forum, an online course for all incoming high-ability students, and at least one Honors-dedicated general education course.

The most recent addition to this program is Honors Inquiry: accepted students are placed into sections of this class based on their major field of interest. Honors Inquiry curriculum focuses on undergraduate research, Honors in the major, and prestige fellowship applications. This year, we added a special section for undecided students, aimed primarily at helping them pinpoint their interests, discover a potential career path, and declare a major.

This three-pronged approach has increased the number of students participating in Honors, and exposed them to undergraduate research opportunities, a scholarly community, and scholarship/fellowship applications.

### **Invitation to a Breakthrough**

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We agree--no question--that first-year students have pressing needs. Many are the first in their family to attend college and don't know what to expect. Many have poor skills in writing and math. Many, to survive, must balance study and job. Many give up and drop out.

The problems go on. We've tried to help. We've opened advising centers, created learning labs, developed seminars and special courses, but the GPA's are still low and attrition high. It's a daunting challenge. No office or department can meet it alone. Faculty, academic departments, admissions, the registrar must work together. A loose collection of options does not suffice. To be effective, support must be comprehensive, integrated, innovated. It must be out-of-the-box, a breakthrough.

This is an invitation to Project Breakthrough. At WCSU, seeking answers to the first-year dilemma, we examined our own and external data, and we invited Richard Light to campus to share with students, faculty, and staff his findings from Making the Most of College. We asked many questions: How to give first-year students not only essential skills but also a chance to follow their interests? How to form student study groups outside of class? How to provide course feedback in time for students to make corrections for a passing grade? How to provide feedback to faculty? How to get faculty to take advising seriously?

Early placement testing, block scheduling, and expanded lab facilities were among the logistics

required. Longitudinal assessment techniques were needed to measure retention and progress toward the degree. We determined to offer Project Breakthrough first as a pilot and then extend it to all entering freshmen. To date it gives every indication of being replicable by other institutions seeking an integrated program for first-year student success.

## **Exploring and Deciding on College Majors by First-Year Students in a Divisional System**

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This study aims to show the process of exploring and deciding college majors for college freshmen in the divisional system. To achieve the goal, this study sets three specific objectives as follows; First, how many students have kept or changed their desired majors during their freshman year? Second, what factors are considered in the students' major choice and what program are helpful for exploring college majors? Third, what factors are effective in keeping and changing their desired majors?

The research findings are as follows; First, 57.7% of the students changed their desired majors at the end of their freshmen year. This means that for students who couldn't explore college majors sufficiently during pre-college period, the first year at college can be a useful opportunity for major exploration. The degree of major changes varied among divisions and GPA groups, but there were no statistical difference between genders. Second, the most considered factors of major choice were inner motives such as academic interests, aptitudes, and possibility of self-improvement via college major. However, the difference of considered factors among divisions, GPA groups, and genders were statistically significant. As for effective programs for major exploration, major related classes were influential to 82% of the students. Major exploration programs other than classes, such as special lectures and small group conferences, were effective to many students and books introducing and describing majors were also effective. Third, the results of analysing the effective factors for keeping or changing the desired majors showed that the variables of divisions, inner motives, and GPA groups were statistically significant. The results also showed that the desired majors chosen based on strong inner motives or sufficient information about careers after

graduation as well as major's curriculum, professors, and etc. tend to be not changed.

## **First-Year Students Choosing Science-Related Majors: Factors Considered**

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College students who choose science related majors in their freshmen year have been declining in Korea as the students in many advanced countries have. Accordingly, many researches have been carried out to unveil the reason and to identify the factors affecting students' decision on choosing major. However, those studies were focused on revealing decision-making sources for mainly primary and middle school students who want to have science related careers.

In this study, I surveyed college freshmen in Yonsei University who were about to decide their science related majors and illucidated the main factors for them to choose their majors. The results of this study should be helpful for developing or re-building curriculum and/or programs to encourage the students to choose science related majors. The employed factors after interviewing the students can be categorized into three; social recognition factors (easiness of employment, social level and contribution, expected income), study factors (academic interest & aptitude, self-improvement possibility via the chosen major, development prospect of major field), family factors (parents' & friends' recommendations).

The study reveals that the surveyed freshmen consider academic interest and aptitude as the principle factor in deciding their science related majors. They considered self-improvement capability via the chosen major next. There were significant statistical differences in the choice factors among the chosen majors. For instance, the students who selected Mathematics and

Atmosphere Science put the easiness of employment in high priority compared with the other students. The freshmen who chose Physics and Bio-chemistry concerned social contribution more than any other students did. In some aspects, there were differences between genders in deciding college major. Taking parents' & friends' recommendations more seriously for female students than male students could be a good example. Other important results and detailed information on deciding college major and the choice factors will be discussed.

## **"Preliminary College" for the New Students**

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As college-entering students face a new educational environment, the first few weeks are very critical for the success of entire college life. We noticed the importance of preliminary interventions for the entering students before the classes begin through several years' experiences of advising the first year students. We offered "Preliminary College" for the new students for the first time this year.

"Preliminary College" is designed to accomplish three objectives:

Firstly, it helps the new students to prepare their first year experience and to survive their college life successfully. Secondly, it helps them to have the recognition that they are prospective leaders in our society with our institution's educational philosophy (Christianity). Thirdly, it helps them to experience a sense of Yonsei community and to strengthen their solidarity.

The program mainly consisted of lecture, group discussion, team project, and entertainment. Specifically, the program focused on 6 topics: What is University? What is Yonsei? What to Think? What to Learn? How to survive? and How to enjoy?

Our institution has 2 campuses, one is located at downtown of Seoul, and the other is in the rural area. We recruited the participants from both campuses and the total number of participants was approximately 850 students. The program was a 4 day program and was operated two times before the first semester began. The program was run at the rural campus and all the participants stayed at the residence hall. The activity unit of participants was 20 students and 2 assistants were assigned to each unit to facilitate the program. Moreover, a faculty member was assigned to 3 units as a guidance professor.

The evaluation of this program was done by several methods. We received the feedback from the assistants and the guidance professors through everyday conference. We also got the students' survey at the end the program. Among them, only the results of students' survey, using a quantitative statistical method, will be mentioned at this presentation. Overall, it was found that participants were fairly satisfied with this program and thought it helpful to prepare their college life.

### **Peer Mentors and The First Year Experience**

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This presentation will focus on the importance of peer mentors/peer educators as part of the first year experience, ranging from First Year summer and fall academic orientation as well as throughout the year. Student Ombuds Service (SOS) students participate in helping student with their first year transition. They are an important conduit between first year students and faculty/staff. Our survey data reveals our peer mentors help first year students feel comfortable with the university, classes, meeting faculty members, and other parts of the university. Throughout the year SOS members go to first year classes to answer questions and make announcements about upcoming presentation. SOS presentations focus on critical skills development such as time management and note taking, as well as other skills related exam writing and studying techniques. They are also involved in presenting career information, bringing in presenters, and helping students who drop by the SOS office.

More specifically, the presentation will be based on discussing the role of peer advisors during the first year experience. The focus in the presentation will be on the Student Ombuds Service (SOS) (Peer Mentors), the function of the SOS during first year orientations, the role they play during the academic year regarding the first year experience, and how they operate as a volunteer student service organization. Survey Feedback received about SOS members and their role during our orientations will be highlighted, as well as anecdotal information about their importance for first year students. This presentation will also emphasize the history and everyday activities of the SOS.