

## The First Six Weeks: Critical Transition Period or Urban Legend?

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Based on the assumption that most students make the decision to leave college within the first six weeks, educators emphasize the critical importance of this time period. However, this assumption has not been substantiated by research. To learn more about this critical transition period, we, at Indiana State University (ISU), followed up with non-returning students and first-year instructors.

In the student study, we asked (via a web-based survey) 355 students in the fall 2002 first-year cohort, who were eligible to return to ISU in the following fall, about why they left the institution and when they made the decision to leave. With 37 useable surveys, we set out to compare those who completed the web survey with those who did not. From a randomized list of non-respondents, we generated 19 complete, useable phone surveys.

Out of a total of 56 responses, 12 (21%) students indicated that they planned to transfer from ISU after the first year (and all but one did). Of the 44 remaining usable responses, none indicated that they began considering an early departure in the “first few days,” and only one indicated that he or she was thinking about leaving in the “first month.” Only three students indicated that they considered leaving during the semester. For these students, the real decision points appeared much later in the year. Twelve students began considering their departure after the first semester had ended, 16 during the second semester, nine as the second semester ended, and three first thought of leaving during the summer following their first year.

For these former students, the ultimate decision to leave occurred shortly after the

initial contemplation. Of the 16 students who began thinking of leaving during or at the end of the first semester, nine solidified their decision during that time frame. Of those 32 students who began thinking about leaving prior to or during the second semester, nine made their decision during the second semester, and another 15 finalized that decision as the semester ended.

In the second study, we got feedback from faculty regarding student attendance. At ISU, an attendance reporting mechanism was instituted in an attempt to comply with Title IV financial aid issues. These attendance reports occur at the end of the third week and tenth week and as part of mid-term grades. Faculty report students to be in four categories: (a) attending, (b) stopped attending, (c) never attended, and (d) excessive absences. To a practically and statistically significant degree, faculty report that the number of students who either stopped attending or had excessive absences increased as the semester progressed. Both the student survey and attendance records indicate to us that students drop out, not in droves during the first six weeks but as they grow bored, disinterested, or disgruntled as the first year advances. Disinterest and disengagement do not occur all at once; they occur over time. In some cases, they occur only during the second semester.

What motivates students to leave college is a well-studied issue. Our results confirm much of what the literature cites. A majority of students who leave attribute their departure to personal, financial, or family reasons. One third of the surveyed students considered the classroom experience an

important or contributing factor to their departure. Financial aid was blamed by 28% of departees, though the same number were as unhappy with the amount of their aid as with their treatment by the Office of Financial Aid. This could well mean that students conflated their displeasure with the messenger and the message. A similar number of students considered parking, academic advising, and their residence hall experiences as factors in their decision to leave college. It is worth noting that the answers to the “when” questions were not statistically or practically different between sample groups, but the answers to the “why” questions were both statistically and practically different. All the respondents who expressed any concern about the Office of Financial Aid or the amount they received were in the first sample (those who actively answered the survey).

While these results show a clear pattern, they represent a sample of only 56 students out of 355 students who failed to return after one year to one university. This study does suggest students at ISU are not significantly likely to make the decision to leave in the first six weeks, and, on this campus, the first-year, first-semester programs may be mistimed, as they are not aligned with students’ late fall through spring decisions.

However, the study did not ask what might have occurred during that time period to cause students to want to leave. Therefore, to really understand when and why students leave college, much more research is needed, in particular, a survey that would explore the first six weeks of college on multiple campuses across the country and across institutional types.

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## Problem-Based Learning Facilitates Transition Success

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When developing a first-year seminar, one major concern is the creation of experiences that help facilitate the successful transition of students from high school to college life. When Millersville University created the one-credit, first-year seminar, special attention was paid to formulating learning outcomes as succinctly as possible. This was particularly important in the areas of writing, speaking, information literacy, and critical thinking—skills that are most often learned outside the seminar classroom. Thus, we decided to use problem-based learning (PBL) as a key component in the one-credit seminar class hoping that it would provide the experiences necessary to achieve student skill attainment.

McMasters discussed problem-based learning in the field of medical education as a way to engage medical students to solve clinical problems. In 2004, this model has flourished in many other educational arenas. The following principles undergird PBL: (a) Learning is student centered, (b) learning occurs in small groups, (c) teachers serve as facilitators in the process, (d) problems stimulate learning and the development of future problem-solving skills, and (e) new information is acquired through self-directed learning (Barrows, 1996).

The inclusion of problem-based learning in the first-year seminar provides the means to engage students in meaningful research that ultimately leads to discussions of real-life experiences on a college campus while also introducing students to many of the learning skills necessary for

college success. Because the class meets once a week for 50 minutes, several of the problem-based learning strategies used in a traditional classroom have been eliminated. Ideally, the students would have more input into the construction of the problem. Given the compressed time frame and the newness of the college experience, instructors chose to clearly structure the problems rather than have students assume responsibility for such formulation. This modified format has worked very nicely for the seminar and has helped to achieve the desired outcomes.

Much has been written about the needs that students bring with them when entering college. The problems were designed to address many of the key issues identified by the most recent research on first-year experiences and by assessment findings of Millersville University's living/learning community. The current topics that were identified and integrated into the first-year seminar through the use of problem-based learning include plagiarism and academic integrity, diversity, alcohol use and abuse, conflict resolution, and choosing/exploring a major. Students are placed by their seminar professor into small groups (4-5 per group) and assigned a specific problem to research. Over a six-week period, students meet independently to solve their problem and answer the questions posed, determine a strategy for presentation to their classmates, and develop a one-to-two-page resource guide on key points and available resources that will aid their fellow students in further research. Each group presentation is approximately 20 minutes in length

with an additional 10-minute question/answer period. The remainder of the 50-minute time frame is used by the facilitator to encourage a deeper investigation of the problem being discussed.

The students' evaluation of their problem-based seminar experience was both positive and supportive. Many students found this experience to be the most meaningful, relevant part of the seminar course. Some of their comments were:

- PBL makes us think and reflect.
- Working in groups is great; we learn from one another.
- Looking at the research and learning about the consequences helped me learn a lot.
- [It is an] excellent way of learning about the real world.

One could conclude, based on these results, that McMasters was correct in thinking that student-centered, real-life work has meaning and helps students acquire the learning necessary for both academic success and a rewarding college life experience.

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## Articulation Agreements Ease Transfer, Contribute to Incoherence of General Education

**Robert Shoenberg**

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For the past six years, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has worked with state higher education coordinating/governing boards (SHEEOs) to define and propagate the intentions of their general education requirements. Nearly all states have some minimal set of courses that must be included in the undergraduate programs of all students receiving baccalaureate degrees. Invariably, states prescribe the broad subject matters (e.g., social sciences, mathematics) but most have nothing to say about the nature of the courses offered to meet those requirements.

These generic sets of requirements are designed to reflect the lowest common denominator of general education programs that are actually in place at most institutions, even though individual institutions may have more complex, extensive, and imaginative general requirements. Because articulation agreements focusing on general education requirements are the product of compromise among the many parties sitting at the table, they are structured to require the least adjustment possible at any institution. Equally important to their designers, these agreements are intended to create the fewest problems possible for students transferring from two-year to four-year institutions, making it convenient for the two-year institutions' general education programs to transfer intact to four-year institutions. While these arrangements may result in *efficiency* of transfer, they are not educationally *effective*.

Many four-year institutions have clearly focused general education programs that provide a coherent education for students who do all their undergraduate work there. Such highly intentional programs, however, appear less frequently at two-year institutions, which are constrained by the need to maximize transfer-

ability from developing programs that deviate from traditional distribution requirements. Interdisciplinary or problem-based courses, which in many colleges provide valuable introductions to the intellectual character of undergraduate study, are likely to pose substantial problems of transfer.

Some states do have regulations that give more leeway to two-year institutions by providing that students completing a general education program at one state institution will be considered to have completed these requirements at any other state institution to which they may transfer. Missouri, for example, requires that individual general education programs be approved by all state institutions. But if students transfer before completing the program, courses are evaluated on an individual basis by the receiving institution.

But as a result of both the clear lack of intention of state requirements and the pressure for credit recognition, transfer students are likely to complete a general education program that lacks focus and is no more than the sum of its parts. A few states (Colorado is a particularly strong example) have stepped into the breach to define the intentions of statewide requirements and establish a concomitant course approval process. In most states, however, transfer students complete a general education program that lacks coherence.

During the summer of 2003, AAC&U conducted an informal survey of the 50 state SHEEOs to determine the nature of the minimal general education requirements they impose and how, if at all, they define those purposes. We were particularly interested in the way the states frame the requirements. Ultimately, we wanted to learn which states provided a rationale for the requirements and

had processes in place that would provide some assurance that all campuses would teach courses in particular general education categories to a common purpose. In other words, we were looking for states that paid some attention to curricular purposes and coherence, states that would provide an answer to the student question, "Why do I have to take this course?"

- All states have a system for facilitating transfer of course credit among institutions. Nearly all of these systems are based on the disciplinary area in which the course is taught and, except for a handful of cases, do not address correspondence of course purposes. Such systems, because they rely heavily on standard models of academic discipline, also have difficulty dealing with interdisciplinary courses.
- All but 10 states have a minimum general education package which all institutions in the state must embody in their individual programs. These requirements range from 30 to 48 credits, with clustering in the 30 to 33 and 40 to 42 ranges. This requirement is couched in four basic forms:
  1. Twenty-five states specify the disciplines and numbers of credits that must be included in any campus' general education program.
  2. Nine states outline a "package" of general education courses which, if completed at one institution, will transfer to any other state institution and fulfill most general education requirements (i.e., an artificial "consensus" program).
  3. Four states specify that completing an approved program at one institution will constitute satisfaction of lower division general education requirements at the receiving institution.
  4. Ten states have no statewide general education requirement at all.

*See Articulation Agreements, p. 4*



*Articulation Agreements, continued*

- The standard package of required general education courses invariably includes English composition, mathematics, and a distribution requirement consisting of some number of courses/credits in science, social science, humanities, and often the arts. Only 17 of the 38 states in our survey that have such a statewide general education minimum requirement go beyond this standard package.
- Of the 38 states, only 10 offer a substantial statement of the purposes of their requirements. The rest are silent on the matter or offer a short paragraph on the value of general education, without reference to a rationale for particular requirements.
- Fourteen states have some sort of state-level review of individual campus courses or programs to assure that they address the subject matter/competency requirements set forth in regulation. Most reviews simply consider the subject matter covered (i.e., Is it physics? Is it literature?), as opposed to the purposes for which the course is taught. Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Missouri, New York, and Minnesota (State Colleges and Universities) are the exceptions, focusing on both subject matter and purpose.

The key issue for transfer students is that only 10 states offer a clear statement of the intentions of general education requirements. For transfers, absence of a rationale and a way of implementing it often result in an undergraduate program lacking in meaning or focus. The credits may transfer, but the studies they represent form no meaningful whole. With 60% of bachelor's degree recipients having attended more than one institution, defining a sense of purpose and principles of coherence for general education programs logically falls to an agency with a view beyond the individual campus, namely the SHEEOs. As a few states have demonstrated, it is possible to define clear intentions for general education that inform

## Students Capture First-Year Transition on Film:

### The Appal iMovie Fest

Nikki Crees

Josh Chambless

Appalachian State University

Start with 12 Apple iBooks and 12 digital video cameras; add 56 first-year students; toss in a pinch of creativity and a heap of prizes. An *Appal iMovie Fest* will emerge in about two weeks (<http://www.imovie.appstate.edu/>).

The Appalachian State University Freshman Learning Communities program, the University Bookstore, Apple Computer, and the Appalachian Instructional Technology Center teamed up in fall 2003 to create the first *Appal iMovie Fest*. The project asked teams of first-year students to document their first-year experience at Appalachian. Duke University, Emory University, and the Georgia Institute of Technology have similar projects as creative competitions between first-year residence halls. Appalachian State University, which has gained a strong reputation for its first-year learning communities, decided to take the iMovie competition into the classroom. Each team consisted of no more than six first-semester students who shared a common membership in one of Appalachian's academic learning community programs. Teams were asked to "capture a moment of change in their first-year experience" in a five- to seven-minute movie.

the programs of all campuses but do not infringe on their autonomy. In those states, transfer students can see some coherent purpose in their general education programs and are less likely to wonder, "Why do I have to take this course?"

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Apple provided each team with an iBook and a digital video camera for a two-week period. Twelve teams submitted proposals and turned in completed films. The final products were then judged on a variety of levels from creative use of theme to innovative use of technology and editing. More than 150 students attended the *Appal iMovie Premiere* to support their fellow film makers and view the movies. The top three winners received prizes, including Apple iPods, donated by Apple and the University Bookstore. Additionally, a host of community sponsors provided t-shirts and door prizes for premiere night participants.

Much to our surprise, the teams highlighted different moments of change from very diverse perspectives. One film captured *See Appal iMovie Fest, p. 5*



The audience. ▲ Nikki Crees with tickets. ▼





The winners. ▲ Runners-up. ▼


*Appal iMovie Fest, continued*

the idea of “fitting in” while another film explored the challenges of doing one’s own laundry. All the films had the undertone of maneuvering independence for the first time.

The winning team, TYRO (The Years Run Out), chose to focus on “change” itself as the key to success in the first-year experience. Whit Emerson, director of the winning film, summarized TYROs thematic integration:

Many of Appalachian’s programs make the initial transition from high school to first-year year easier. But we were more concerned with another change that Appalachian cannot always address—the internal change needed to pull one out of one’s normal routine. Once we knew our way around the school and had made a few friends, our days became pretty repetitive. We needed to get involved and take chances in our lives, just like the young woman in our movie, who chose a different path. It was this ‘moment of change’ that best illustrates our first semester.

Participating students had a broad spectrum of familiarity with the equipment and technology. A few students had never used a digital video camera; even more had never used iMovie software to edit a movie. To even the playing field, we provided two pre-production workshops on using the equipment and software. We also provided teams with an online survival guide and a hotline number during the filming and editing process.

Teams learned quickly that the technical aspect of this project was perhaps the least challenging part. Mr. Emerson explained, “I learned, in a very hands-on way, how movies are made from the conception of the film to the final editing. It was very easy to use the iMovie software and the cameras. The team work was the most difficult part.”

Paula Schmitt, a member of the group that created “Dirty Laundry,” confirmed that “working in this team taught me valuable delegation skills, the technique of compromising, and how difficult it can be to get four people’s schedules to match.”

Students participated in the *Appal iMovie Fest* for a variety of reasons: prizes, interest in the technology, or interest in film. What they got out of the project was a sense of accomplishment and pride in their own creativity and abilities. Ms. Schmitt believes that she would be more excited about traditional class group work if it were designed more like the *Appal iMovie Fest*.

This [project] allowed me to express myself in a way that I had never had the chance to before. Being provided hands-on access to technology taught me things that I would have missed in a mere lecture on the same technology, or simply creating a storyboard for a movie, but never being able to see it through to completion. I am very interested in pursuing a career in film or electronic media...becoming familiar with the technology through

this project will help me succeed in the future on this path.

One parent sent the following note about his son’s participation in this project:

The whole project gave my son an opportunity to try something he hadn’t done before and to express himself in a unique manner. He derived a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction from it. He’s already working on his second movie. You never know what good you do when you give students an opportunity to be creative! Thanks from a dad!

The engagement in learning may also lead to increased retention. *Appal iMovie Fest* participants were retained to the second semester at a rate of 100%. Retention to third semester is currently at 91%.

Appalachian is planning a sequel to the *Appal iMovie Fest* for fall 2004. We intend to expand the project to allow teams from even more learning communities, including our new residential learning communities. We also plan to disseminate information and ideas from the *Appal iMovie Fest* to administrators and faculty on our own campus as well as other campuses.

This project could easily be adapted to a single class assignment if ample time is allowed to plan it and negotiate the equipment. Inviting students to explore creative projects using new media can be an amazing tool not only for learning technology, but, more important, for developing those valuable life skills that we all hope our students are gleaned from a college education: leadership, collaboration, delegation, project design, and critical thinking.

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## What's Happening at the Center

### Conferences

*11th National Conference on Students in Transition*, November 7-9, 2004, Nashville, Tennessee.

*24th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience*, February 4-8, 2005, Phoenix, Arizona.

### Publications

*Integrating the First-Year Experience: The Role of First-Year Seminars in Learning Communities* is now available. This monograph, edited by Jean M. Henscheid, examines the effects of linking first-year seminars to learning communities and reviews successful programs at institutions nationwide. Strategies for linking courses and involving faculty, peer leaders, and other administrators are outlined. The collection of case studies provides a guide for establishing and enhancing such programs.

Building on the popularity of *Helping Your First-Year College Student Succeed: A Guide for Parents*, the National Resource Center and National Orientation Directors Association present a new guide introducing families to the college experience—this one focused on the unique concerns and needs of first-year commuter students.

*A Guide for Families of Commuter Students: Supporting Your Student's Success* by Cathie Hatch and Tracy L. Skipper describes the transition to college from the perspective of the commuter student and offers guidance to families on helping students navigate the transition to college and succeed. Unique to this guide are graphic representations of work and school schedules and a glossary of college terms. The *Guide* will be available in mid-October.

### Research and Assessment

The National Resource Center conducted the sixth administration of its triennial survey on first-year seminars in fall 2003. This survey continues the Center's

commitment to researching and providing comprehensive information on the nature of first-year seminars. A short summary of survey findings is now available on our web site under the Research link at <http://www.sc.edu/fye/research/surveyfindings/surveys/survey03.html>. A more detailed report will be published as a monograph and will be available for purchase in spring 2005.

### Other Resources

The National Resource Center's website has undergone a few changes in the past few months. The most substantive addition is a section dedicated to assessment of the first college year. Offering resources related to course evaluations—including links to free web-based evaluation tools—and commercially available assessment instruments, the assessment web page is available at <http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/assessment/index.html>.

As a part of the new assessment web page, the NRC has created a new web interface for its popular First-Year Assessment Listserv (FYA-List). Available at <http://www.sc.edu/resources/assessment/index2.html>, the FYA-List kicked off the academic year with an invited essay about learning community assessment from NRC Fellow Jean Henscheid. Future essays will address the topics of learning communities, assessment instruments, and the use of electronic portfolios.

Finally, the Center has updated its online resources related to summer/first-year reading programs. With over 40 programs and several hundred books listed, our updated web page can be viewed at <http://www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr/index.html>. Our new online database allows you to search by year, title, author and/or school to help you find the information that's important to you.

## AAC&U Encourages Campuses to Bring Theory to Practice: A Resource

**Donald W. Harward**

Director of the BTtoP Project

Evidence of alarming rates of depression and substance abuse in college students is mounting. The Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) Project launches a multi-year initiative, sponsored by the Charles Engelhard Foundation of New York City. Initially, the Project explores and appraises whether and how specific forms of engaged learning including, but not limited to, civic engagement or service-learning and community-directed collaborative research could be effective as part of intervention or prevention strategies to address two debilitating conditions of student behavior and health—substance abuse and depression.

It is the mission of the BTtoP Project to support the exploration, understanding, and application of the uses and consequences of engaged learning (and their institutionalization throughout colleges and universities). Forms of engaged learning are those that require significant intellectual commitment from students, that call upon the respect and valuing of the student's full experience and contributions, and that use contexts for learning (including the community) beyond the classroom and beyond information transfer. These forms oblige students and faculty to take greater responsibility for learning and foster the students' development as individual learners and maturation in their civic lives and responsibilities.

The Project is guided by a planning group of interdisciplinary scholars, researchers, practitioners, and institutional leaders. Other institutions, wishing to explore the opportunities of association with the Project and support, can receive copies of reports and other information regarding strategic initiatives now undertaken by the Project.

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## Educator Adapts American FYE to Scottish Context

**Stephen Draper**

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Last September, I heard Randy Swing (Co-Director and Senior Scholar at Policy Center on the First Year of College) describe recent innovations in US higher education (HE) to support first-year students. The seven innovative practices Swing mentioned were:

- Forestalling dropouts by a phone call
- First-year (or “freshman”) seminars
- Learning communities
- Supplemental Instruction (peer-assisted learning or PAL)
- Summer reading programs
- Enrollment, recruitment, and advising specialization
- Evidence-based educational change (assessments)

The question, for me, was whether these innovations would apply usefully in the UK context. On the one hand, the UK is now expanding HE provision to a wider proportion of the population, bringing in larger numbers of non-traditional students, and, in this respect, is following the US. So, it might make sense to draw lessons from the US experience. On the other hand, structural differences in the two systems of HE may mean that problems in the US system may not exist in the UK. In that case, some remedies would be unnecessary.

I will discuss how the first four practices would translate to my own university, the University of Glasgow, and whether or not they suggest changes we might usefully try.

### Forestalling Dropouts Through a Single Phone Call

A controlled experiment at the University of Mississippi (Anderson & Gates, 2002) showed that a single phone call expressing concern after a student missed two classes in eight weeks, increased the number of students receiving grade C or better from 55% to 87%. An attempt was made to replicate the experiment at the University of Glasgow for students taking the first-semester, first-year psychology course. Our criterion was missing two consecutive tutorials. Those meeting the criterion were then ran-

domly assigned to receive either an e-mail or a phone call. There were big differences in the effectiveness of the two methods in reaching the students and gaining an acknowledgment. An extensive survey revealed that the phone calls were not seen as intrusive or unwelcome. However, no differences were found in dropout or exam grades at the end of the semester between the groups (Table 1). This, therefore, no longer seems a promising technique, although it is possible that responding to the very first absence rather than to two consecutive absences might make a difference, by being more timely and reaching more students potentially at risk. We may perhaps try this next session.

Table 1  
*Results of Contact With Students Missing Two Consecutive Tutorials*

	E-mail group	Telephone group
Total number of students meeting the criterion	30	30
Number of students who were reached	5	20
Of these, number of students who had already dropped out	2	5
Total number of dropouts by end of semester	17	17

### First-Year (or “Freshman”) Seminars

First-year seminars in the USA are often full-time, for-credit, semester-long courses run in groups of about 20 students, rather than hundreds, taught by faculty or staff members with the aim of helping students develop college-level academic skills, introduce them to campus resources, and ease the transition to college. To what extent do first-year tutorials in the UK



University of Glasgow

cover this function, even though normally conceived of as covering technical skills, e.g. going over exercises and other assignments? At the University of Glasgow, a first-year student may enroll in three tutorials a week, one per subject, although there is no uniform policy. Furthermore, tutorials may not be weekly but fortnightly. They are very often not taught by permanent academic staff. They may or may not have a substantial study skills component.

All of this suggests that level-1 tutorials may be the most important factor determining learning quality, student performance, and dropout rate. If it turns out that they are, then it means that our understanding of their aim and purpose should be changed: not just providing a bit of assistance with the technical content of the least advanced courses, but also supporting the step change to different study habits, and forming the relationship between the students and the subject and, indeed, the university. Furthermore, recent experience with PAL (peer-assisted learning) has made me think that groups with no more than five students are important for some things, such as willingness to speak out and to engage in meaningful conceptual discussion.

*Scottish Context, p. 8*





▲ Library  
 Graduation ceremony in Bute Hall. ▶  
*Scottish Context, continued*



### Learning Communities

The simple underlying idea of learning communities is that if students share the same experiences, then they will automatically talk about them, learn more, and feel less isolated. The US system of consumeristic “freedom of choice” comes at the price of fragmentation, which in turn often leads to (intellectual) isolation. The English system automatically largely avoids this, as students are accepted for a specific program and do most of their courses with the same cohort. In the Scottish “faculty entry system” (which operates at Glasgow), before joining a relatively fixed honors program for the second two years, students have a wide and individual choice of course combinations within their faculty (analogous to a college or school in US institutions) and, thus, face the same situation as their US colleagues: They are most at risk of isolation. To combat this, we could use our existing databases to put students who have the most in common (same course combinations, same hall of residence) in touch, or at least in the same tutorial groups.

### PAL (Peer-Assisted Learning)

I have also launched a PAL (peer-assisted learning) scheme. While similar to and inspired by the Supplemental Instruction schemes at many US universities, the emphasis is less on instruction and hiring junior tutors with the best grades, and more on facilitating mutual help through discussion among members of the same class, led by senior students selected for facilitation skills. Thus, this program has

greater emphasis on collaborative learning with a touch of mentoring (the experiences of the senior students), and less on providing extra expert knowledge. The scheme I have introduced differs only in a modest change in relative emphasis. I have more on this at <http://pal.psy.gla.ac.uk/>

### Conclusion

The recent US innovations discussed are all related to the social dimension of learning. It is particularly important, nowadays, for a traditional, campus-based, face-to-face (as opposed to distance-learning) university such as the University of Glasgow to consider social dimension. The university should be able to deliver an effective experience of learning communities by exploiting the potential advantages of the presence of learners with the same aims and experiences.

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