E-SOURCE 6.1

Outdoor Adventure Program Retains New Students

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Research suggests that attendance and participation in outdoor experiential adventure programs may increase the retention rate in the student population. Data generated in a study by Gass (1987) suggest that transition programs, and especially those using an adventure-based model, lead to better retention than traditional types of orientation programs. Elon University is a small private school located in the Southeast. The university's Adventures in Leadership (AIL), an outdoor experiential program held each summer, was launched in 1983 primarily to introduce new students to innovative leadership and service programs and to promote campus recreation, which at that time had a new campus facility. It was also expected to help first-year students make the transition to university life (Waters, personal communication, July 9, 2008). In 2006, we initiated our own study at Elon to determine if first-year summer experiences are conducive to increasing the rate of institutional retention of university students.

AIL participants enjoy a panoramic view.

OUTDOOR Cont. from p. 1

A secured AIL participant climbs the face of a boulder.

Elon University's Adventures in Leadership Program is a week-long program for incoming first-year students, designed to aid in developing leadership skills and a greater understanding of community, while promoting teamwork and building friendships. The program helps students learn more about themselves in the natural world and facilitates the transition into their first year of college. The program is led by students, with two staff and/or faculty in support roles. The lead facilitator is a student with previous AIL experience; other facilitators typically are also former participants. There are two student facilitators per group of 12 participants. While outdoor activities such as hiking and rock climbing form the main portion of the AIL program, the closing ceremony consists of a meal, a multi-media presentation, and a time for sharing of

the experience. The six-day itinerary includes:

> *Day One*: Arrival and check-in at university; introductory activities; setting up tents
> *Day Two*: Low ropes challenge course; departing for base camp; setting up camp
> *Day Three*: Rock climbing and rappelling and hiking
> *Days Four and Five*: One night and two days on the river
> *Day Six*: Departing for university; closing ceremony/banquet with families; departure

At spring orientation, AIL is offered to all incoming students as an optional component within first-year programs. The 2006 cohort consisted of 55 students (31 males and 24 females), who were the sample for our study. During the next year's summer, the appropriate offices on campus were contacted to determine if the previous year's AIL participants had

continued to pursue their degrees, as indicated through registration for fall semester. If any former AIL participants had withdrawn from school, the appropriate office was contacted to determine what reasons were given as to why the students had left.

Impact on Retention

While the overall retention rates for all students at Elon was a high 90%, the rate of overall retention for the AIL participants was 94.5%; raw data and percentages are shown in Table 1. These data were obtained through review of Common Data Sets on Enrollment and Persistence, which identify students who continued their enrollment into their second year, and is found through the Office of Institutional Research. Phone calls to relevant offices on campus enabled the investigator to determine if the subjects were in fact still registered for classes held during the fall semester of their sophomore year.

Table 1
Overall Retention at Targeted University of the First-Year Class

Fall 2006 First-Year Enrollment		Sophomore Year Enrollment	Sophomore Male Enrollment	Sophomore Female Enrollment
All first-year students	*N* = 1,283 males = 543 females = 740	90.0%	89.3%	90.5%
AIL participants	*n* = 55 males = 31 females = 24	94.5%	93.6%	95.8%
Non-AIL students	*n* = 1,228 males = 512 females = 716	89.8%	89.0%	90.4%

Note. Data for 2006 First-Year Class and Non-AIL students taken from Common Data Set (Enrollment and Persistence) Institutional Research, Elon University, October 15, 2006 and October 15, 2007, respectively. Data for AIL participants received from Academic Advising Center, Elon University, October, 15, 2007.

The Big Picture

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Creating Alliances Between Academic and Student Affairs: The Human Dimension

The previous issue of this column focused on promoting collaboration between academic and student affairs by use of strategies that involved organizational or structural change. This column focuses on promoting collaboration through social processes designed to cultivate positive interpersonal interactions and working relationships between faculty and student development professionals. The article is addressed to student development professionals because as a group they historically have shown great motivation and commitment to building cross-functional partnerships and a "seamless" learning experience for undergraduate students (Blake, 1996; Kuh, 1996). The strategies are organized into three key categories: (a) human relations and networking; (b) altruistic acts of courtesy and goodwill; and (c) personal validation, recognition, and reward.

Human Relations and Networking

Get to know faculty on a personal basis. Both Marchese (1995) and Schroeder (2005) argue one of the major challenges to developing collaborative partnerships between academic and student affairs is that their work is segregated into "functional silos," which limits the quality and frequency of interpersonal communication between members of these two important divisions. Obviously, there must be an exchange of interpersonal contact before collaboration can take place, and if interpersonal contact is pleasant and personable, collaboration is more likely to occur; an example might be to invite a faculty member, or a small group of faculty, to lunch.

Show interest in the professional and scholarly interests of faculty. Becoming familiar with faculty members' areas of expertise and scholarly interests also allows student development professionals to identify faculty whose work may have implications for the cocurriculum. These faculty members could be invited to engage in collaborative projects, such as research studies or grant proposals, or to make presentations on their work at student development meetings or retreats. For example, an anthropologist or sociologist might be interested in research that involves observational or naturalistic studies of student behavior on campus, the result of which may enable the Office of Student Affairs to assess the frequency and forms of student involvement on campus, or the frequency and nature of students' interracial interactions.

Become familiar with faculty members' avocational interests. Student development professionals who become familiar with faculty members' hobbies or recreational pursuits are well positioned to selectively target and recruit faculty for cocurricular partnerships that relate to the faculty members' personal interests. For example, a professor who is a cycling enthusiast may be interested in sponsoring a student cycling club.

Extend a special welcome to new faculty. Research suggests that first impressions are powerful and may set the tone for future interactions (Demarais & White, 2004). If a new faculty member has a positive initial interaction with a student development professional, it may have long-lasting impact on the faculty member's attitude toward and involvement with the cocurriculum. Faculty priorities and habits are often shaped by their initial experiences in academe; once these priorities and habits are established, they may persist throughout the faculty member's career. I am a living example of a faculty member whose career path was altered by a student development professional who befriended me when I assumed my first, full-time faculty position after graduate school. He got

CUSEO Cont. from p. 3

me interested in student life outside the classroom and persuaded me to shepherd a first-year experience course through the curriculum committee to obtain its approval. He later asked me to teach the course and help co-direct it, which I did. Now, more than a quarter of a century later, I'm still directing an FYE course and continue to engage in scholarly pursuits relating to the first-year experience and students in transition. With some conscious forethought, student development professionals may be able to replicate my experience for other new faculty, increasing the likelihood that faculty collaboration does not happen randomly or serendipitously, but intentionally.

Altruistic Acts of Courtesy and Goodwill

Build an interpersonal foundation for potential alliances by doing unexpected favors for faculty. For example, help students form study groups for their courses, pass along articles that may be of interest to faculty, or invite faculty to conferences that address issues relevant to both faculty and student development professionals.

Show interest in courses taught by faculty and ask them about cocurricular experiences they think might augment or reinforce what they are trying accomplish in the classroom. This is not only a good human relations practice; it is also good educational practice for student development professionals to learn as much as possible about the academic curriculum, so that they may then forge closer connections with the cocurriculum. This suggestion may be implemented extensively, yet efficiently, by a division of labor in which different academic departments are assigned different student development professionals who act as liaisons or "connection agents," looking for opportunities to connect the department's course offerings with cocurricular programs.

Equip faculty with *templates* or *models* that could be used as in-class exercises or out-of-class course assignments to connect their course with cocurricular programming. These templates could be included as part of a practical, ready-to-use source book or resource guide constructed by student development professionals for faculty. The source book could be offered to veteran faculty members under the auspices of faculty development, and it may be delivered proactively to new faculty during new-faculty orientation.

Participate in faculty-sponsored events. Student development professionals could attend faculty lecture series or faculty development workshops that have implications for student learning; they might also volunteer to visit with, or serve on, faculty committees and task forces working on issues that have implications for student life outside the classroom. If student development professionals participate in faculty-organized activities, faculty may be more likely to reciprocate and participate in cocurricular activities organized by student development professionals.

Personal Validation, Recognition, and Reward

Acknowledge faculty for their contributions to student life. This can be done informally by sending faculty members personal thank-you notes for their participation, or by supplying them with tickets for free meals or events on campus. More formal acknowledgement may be provided by writing a letter of commendation to the faculty member's department chair or academic dean for inclusion in the faculty member's personnel file or professional portfolio, or by recognizing those faculty who have made particularly significant contributions by presenting them with a "student service award" at graduation, convocation, or a student awards ceremony.

Lobby for faculty retention-and-promotion systems that reward faculty for their contributions to the cocurriculum. Some faculty may be interested in contributing to student life outside the classroom but are reluctant to do so because their involvement will not make a whit of difference for their professional advancement and job security. In fact, faculty who become involved with student development may do so at the risk of impeding their own professional advancement because spending time with students outside the classroom subtracts time from professional responsibilities that "really count" in the promotion-and-tenure process (e.g., research). Student development professionals can help support faculty and promote their involvement in the cocurriculum by raising the consciousness of high-level administrators

about how rank-and-promotion policies should reward, not penalize, faculty for contributing to student life outside the classroom.

While the earlier essays in this series underscored the importance of structures in creating effective collaborations, we must recognize that they are necessary but not sufficient. Without personal relationships built through the kinds of social processes described here, such structures are merely empty shells.

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Program Connects First-Year Students and Their Families to the College Community

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Huntingdon College has seen the number of first-generation college students increase from about 20% a decade ago to approximately 40% in the current year. Research indicates that students whose parents did not attend college are more likely than their non-first-generation counterparts to be less academically prepared for college and have more difficulty in acclimating themselves to college upon matriculation (Choy, 2001;Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). In general, we have found our first-generation college students to be less academically prepared for college and to have more challenges adjusting during the first semester of college.

To assist first-year students and their families in adapting to college, we initiated a First-Year Early Communication Program (FYECP). Our initial intent was to communicate early with first-generation college students and their families, but our program focused on all first-year students and families, because others have noted that efforts to assist first-generation college students' and their families' adjustment to college have beneficiary results for all first-year students (Tym et al., 2004).

Although most admissions counselors communicate with first-year students from deposit to enrollment, we believed a faculty/staff approach would augment admissions and peer approaches to early communication by emphasizing the personal interaction between faculty/staff and students/families, by focusing early on academic issues and questions, and by providing another connection to the college community. By making more connections between faculty/staff and first-year students/families, we believed students would be more likely to participate in college activities, interact with faculty outside the classroom, succeed in the classroom, and remain enrolled. Our hypotheses were that our FYECP would increase first-year to sophomore retention rates, family participation in college activities, student rates of satisfaction with the first year of college, and student-faculty interaction outside the classroom.

Strategies Used in the FYECP

First-Year Experience (FYEx) facilitators included faculty, staff, and administrators (e.g., the college president, dean, and provost) who were trained in a required two-day workshop; approximately 50% of the FYEx facilitators were full-time teaching faculty. All facilitators participated in the three required summer orientation/registration sessions and led the one semester, First-Year Experience Seminar, FYEx 101. If faculty members experienced work overloads

by teaching the one-hour course, they were compensated with overload pay.

FYEx facilitators kept records on: (a) all communications involving first-year students and their families, (b) attendance of students in the FYEx 101 seminar course and at FYEx-sponsored dinners and events, and (c) the number of family members who attended Family Weekend and summer orientation/registration. The Office of Admission provided evaluations for all summer orientations, and records of the number of deposited and withdrawn students each week. The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness provided data on first-to-second-semester retention of first-year students, first-year to second-year retention data, and results from end-of-term FYEx 101 surveys for each year of our study.

FYEx facilitators received e-mail updates with spreadsheet information on each assigned student and family, including student name, address, expected major, pre-professional aspirations, athletic status, high school attended, e-mail addresses of parents and student, and parent names and addresses. The FYEx director provided each FYEx facilitator with a timeline and sample letters for student/family communications (see Table 1, p. 7). FYEx facilitators used letters, phone calls, e-mails, and graduation/congratulatory cards to contact students and families and kept a log of all communications to and from students and families from April 1–December 31.

Each facilitator made four to six communications per student/family, from the moment of admission

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Table 1
FYECP Communication Timeline

Communication No.	Date	Recipient	Topic(s)
1	April-May 1 (upon student deposit)	FY student	Welcome, introduce FYEx facilitator and role, information on summer reading, invitation to orientation
2	April-May 1	FY family members	Welcome, introduce FYEx facilitator, communication issues, invitation to orientation
3	May 31	FY student	Congratulatory graduation card with handwritten note
4	June 15	FY student/ family	Orientation reminder, what to bring, Family Weekend information
5	July 15	FY student/ family	Glad-to-meet-you post-orientation postcards, booklist web site, FYEx 101 syllabus link
6	July 31	FY student	Looking-forward-to-college e-mail to student

deposit until orientation. Many families and students responded with questions from April-July; each FYEx facilitator logged more than 70 communications during that time period. Three levels of communication were coded on each FYEx communication log: (a) informational outreach (IO), as in move-in times for students and textbook information; (b) career-based outreach (CBO), which included pre-professional internships and work-study placement; and (c) academic support (AS), such as the hours of operation for academic assistance centers. As a final touch, during orientation family members were invited to write a letter to their son or daughter, which was then delivered via campus mail during the second week of class.

How The FYECP Performed

While some communications were assigned more than one code, an 85.6% majority of all communications with students and families were classified as informational outreach (IO), 31.4% of the total number of communications were career-based outreach (CBO) communications, and a small percentage (2.9%) concerned academic support (AS). Post-orientation surveys completed by first-year students and their families showed an average Likert rating of 4.65/5.00 on the individual student/family-FYEx facilitator registration meetings at orientation, the highest rated event of all orientations held during 2004-2006. We also saw an increase in the percentage of deposits retained from May 1-August 15 in the years the FYECP

was in operation (91.6% for 2004, 89.5.0% for 2005, and 90.7% for 2006), compared to 86.0% for 2003 when the FYECP was not in effect. A correlation ($r = 0.991863$) between the mean number of FYEx contacts per student/family and the number of family members at first-year college events was also observed. Retention of first-year students from first to second semester increased dramatically from 66.5% in 2003 to 90.6%, 90.0%, and 90.5% in successive years, while student-reported satisfaction (Likert scale) with the first semester of college increased from 2.75 in 2003 to 4.51, 4.43, and 3.21 in successive years.

Discussion and Implications for the Future

Results from three years of our FYECP assessment centered on five themes:

1. A majority of all the communications made between FYEx facilitators and first-year students/families from April-July involved informational outreach (IO).
2. The number of contacts made by FYEx facilitators correlated with the total number of family members who attended summer orientation sessions and participated in Family Weekend. The number of family members attending summer orientation more than doubled from 2003 - 2006, indicating more family connections to the college.
3. The percentage of admission deposits retained from May

COMMUNICATION Cont. from p. 7

1-August 15 increased by an average of 5%, or about 9-10 deposits more per year.

4. First-to-second-semester retention of first-year students increased, as did student-reported satisfaction with the first semester of college. No correlation was found between any aspect of the FYECP and the overall first-to-second-year retention rate measured, which ranged from 66.0-70.0% during the study.

5. Student-FYEx facilitator interaction outside the classroom increased. This was particularly evident in the number of students who attended dinners, pizza parties, or lunches with their FYEx facilitator when compared to these activities prior to the FYECP.

While we were unable to separate data of first-generation college students from that of other first-year students in our study, we hope to do so in the future. The Class of 2008, the first group of students who participated in the FYECP/FYEx program, graduated with a 65.0% four-year graduation rate, which is significantly higher than the overall four-year graduation rate of 49.0% in previous years when the FYECP/FYEx program was not in place.

Family survey responses to FYEx assessment questions showed a mean Likert-scale rating of 4.62 in response to the statement "Early communication from the college is helpful," and a rating of 4.40 in response to the statement "It is easy for me to find and contact the appropriate person on campus to answer questions." Student-reported satisfaction with the FYEx program during the three years averaged 4.31 on a Likert scale.

Implications for best practices for our FYECP include continued early communication with students and families, continuation of the inclusion of families in the orientation/registration process, and implementation of a second-semester seminar to sustain weekly contact with the FYEx facilitator and allow facilitators to address second-semester academic issues. Given that many admissions staff, administrators, and first-year faculty members have Facebook and MySpace accounts, we are now also including these popular online social networking sites to facilitate even greater early communication with first-year students and their families.

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First-Year Experience Course Improves Students' Financial Literacy

Credit management is a common problem among college students. A 2001 report from the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) shows that most college students have credit cards and use them frequently, with each student having about three, on average. A majority pays off their monthly balances, but about 40% do not, and the average credit-card debt among these students is $2,748. Students participating in the GAO study generally agreed that they had not anticipated how difficult it would be to pay off their debts upon graduation. According to the College Board, the average undergraduate student with loans graduated owing $19,400 in 1998-1999.

To evaluate the effectiveness of teaching basic financial literacy concepts, a select number of students who had enrolled in a first-year seminar at Lakeland College were exposed to a short financial literacy-training workshop in the fall of 2007. The workshop, offered to two sections of the five-section first-year seminar, was motivated by Lakeland College internal research that pointed to financial problems as a frequent reason for students withdrawing from their studies. The training covered four key topics of financial literacy:

1. Education and earning-potential
2. Building long-term wealth
3. Saving and investing
4. Credit scores and reports

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Presented by a Lakeland economics professor, the first half of the training exposed students to a true and false game of building wealth, where they learned about the link between education and earnings, characteristics of wealthy people, the basics of saving and compound interest, and fundamentals of investing and risk. In the second half of the training, led by a representative from a local consumer credit counseling service, students learned specifics about credit scores and reports and how they impact their future. To gauge the effectiveness of the workshop, students completed an 11-item survey on attitudes about money management (Niederjohn & Schug, 2006; Niederjohn, Schug, & Wood, 2006; Niederjohn & Wood, 2007). The pre-attitude and knowledge survey was administered in class before the training session, and the post-survey was conducted within a week of the workshop's conclusion. Because the financial literacy workshop was offered only to two sections of the five-section first-year seminar, students enrolled in the three remaining sections served as a control group.

Attitude Survey Results

Table 1 (p. 10) illustrates the results of the money management attitude surveys that students completed before and after their exposure to the financial literacy training. Statement responses were measured on a Likert scale with "1" representing "Strong Agreement" and "5" representing "Strong Disagreement." The treatment group showed changes in the expected direction on the posttest on eight of the 11 survey statements. Of these eight, five showed a statistically significant change in the expected direction. Two of the statements showed a statistically significant movement in the opposite direction expected. The control group showed only four statements that changed in the expected direction with two of those at a statistically significant level. Some specific observations include:

- Students exposed to the training made statistically significant gains on the statements related to saving and spending money (statements 1, 2, and 3). After the training, students were more likely to disagree with survey statements about their need to spend money now or their inability to save in their current situation. Students in the control group showed no significant change in their attitudes on these subjects.

- On the subject of education and earnings (statement 4), both groups moved in the expected direction recognizing that more education leads to higher future incomes; however, the treatment group did not show a statistically significant change. As can be seen by the very low mean scores for this statement, the majority of

Table 1

Results of Testing of Attitude Survey Statements

Attitude Statement	Pre-test mean		Post-test mean	
	Training	Control	Training	Control
1. I believe it is important to buy the things I want when I want them.	3.40 (1.09)	3.40 (1.04)	3.72** (1.04)	3.26 (1.06)
2. I'd like to start saving money today but my current situation prevents it.	2.65 (1.30)	2.43 (1.19)	3.08* (1.25)	2.36 (1.08)
3. The thing I enjoy most about making money is spending money.	2.85 (1.29)	3.12 (1.15)	3.17* (1.17)	2.88* (1.13)
4. People with more education earn more money than people with less education.	2.23 (1.17)	2.00 (1.08)	1.95 (1.22)	1.67** (0.816)
5. A smart strategy for financial success is for families to have five credit cards.	4.70 (0.56)	4.55 (0.59)	4.42* (0.96)	4.71* (0.46)
6. There are times when borrowing money is the smartest thing to do.	3.07 (1.02)	2.79 (0.90)	2.87 (1.23)	2.60 (0.99)
7. A family has to have a very high income in order to have a million dollars by retirement age.	3.58 (0.96)	3.45 (0.99)	4.23*** (0.89)	3.69 (0.98)
8. A smart strategy for financial success is to pay off your monthly credit card balance.	1.62 (0.64)	1.62 (0.88)	1.53 (0.77)	1.71 (0.77)
9. Owning stocks is a riskier form of investment than owning a government bond.	2.42 (0.83)	2.33 (0.72)	2.78* (1.15)	2.52 (0.71)
10. People interested in earning a good income should forget about school and get a good job.	4.37 (0.80)	4.33 (0.85)	4.28 (0.87)	4.29 (0.74)
11. Maintaining a better credit score is something that is within my power to do.	1.60 (0.72)	1.69 (0.64)	1.45* (0.68)	1.64 (0.49)

Note. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$

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students in both groups either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement on both the pre- and post-survey, suggesting that they came into the experiment already aware of this link.

- On the topics of using loans and credit (statements 5, 6, and 8), the results were mixed. Both groups moved in the expected direction on the statement related to borrowing being the smartest thing to do in some situations; however, neither group's change was statistically significant. Perhaps the most troubling finding in the study came with statement 5: After being exposed to the training, significantly fewer students disagreed with the statement that having five credit cards is a smart strategy for families. The control group made gains in the appropriate direction on this statement. The finding may be explained by the emphasis on credit scores during the training. For example, students learned that in order to improve their credit score they need to have and use credit, and that closing lines of credit can actually hurt their score. The treatment group moved in the expected direction on the statement about paying off credit card balances; however, the result was not statistically significant.

- Those who were exposed to the training showed a dramatic

change in response to statement 7, while the control group did not indicate a statistically significant change.

- Statement 9, designed to evaluate students' understanding of the risk of various investment assets, presented a curious finding. While the training emphasized the need to invest in stocks as a long-term investment due to their impressive historical return, a statistically significant decrease in students exposed to the training agreed that stocks are riskier investments than bonds. Perhaps the training program was the culprit.
- Lastly, the students exposed to the training showed a statistically significant gain in the belief that maintaining a better credit score is within their power. There was no change on this statement for the control group.

Conclusion

This assessment suggests that a simple financial literacy-training program can be effective in promoting first-year college students' understanding of money management. A pre- and post-survey design with a control group suggests that statistically significant learning took place among the 60 students who participated in this activity. On five of the 11 survey statements, students' attitudes about money changed in the desired direction with statistical significance, while such a result was only obtained on two statements for the group of control students.

These results are impressive given how little time and emphasis was put into financial literacy in this course. If the training were expanded beyond an hour and a half seminar, perhaps becoming a regular part of the first-year seminar, better results could be expected. On two survey statements the students' attitudes changed in an unexpected direction after training; both of these statements suggest areas where training can be improved.

This project is scheduled again for the fall of 2008, and a number of changes have been made to the format and curriculum to try to address some of the problems cited. For example, more time will be dedicated to financial literacy by employing a series of workshops throughout the semester rather than a single session. Presenters will also use the results of this research to better shape their presentations, curriculum, and pedagogical style. The goal continues to be to educate Lakeland College students on the basics of financial literacy and to make this workshop a permanent part of the college's first-year seminar.

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Wright State University Expands Service-Learning in the First Year

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The Foundations of Excellence self-study action plan in 2005-2006 at Wright State University recommended that we expand our first-year experience program through the entire academic year. At the time of the study, we had developed a strong fall quarter program, but we needed to continue to provide opportunities for student development and interaction during the winter and spring quarters. We hoped that providing service opportunities for first-year students would augment the objectives of our first-year experience program, which include enhancing students' academic and social success in order to provide a foundation for lifelong learning, personal growth, professional achievement, service, and citizenship. Service-learning opportunities also assist in the integration of curricular and cocurricular learning within our general education program.

To develop this program, the university created two positions: a full-time director of service-learning, who is responsible for university-wide initiatives and for working with faculty of all disciplines and with upper-level students; and a part-time coordinator for service-learning and civic engagement for first-year students, who works with the nonprofit sector and community-based organizations (CBOs), to develop service projects for first-year students.

The input of faculty, staff, and student leaders was invaluable in developing the program framework, getting support from the campus community, and engaging students in meaningful service-learning projects. At Wright State, the new coordinator for service-learning and civic engagement asked faculty, student affairs staff, and students about their vision for service-learning on campus. The meetings shed light on what service-learning projects had been done in the past by student organizations or individual faculty and helped shaped the future of service-learning at WSU.

Faculty with service-learning experience were asked to consider what types of service-learning projects they had done with students in the past and with whom they had partnered in the community. They also identified other potential partnerships between the university and community-based organizations that might be worth exploring. Faculty also considered if past projects had met established objectives, what changes they might make, and how service-learning staff might best support them.

We asked students to identify what issues they were concerned with, and what types of projects interested them. Students also gave thought to how service-learning staff might better motivate and prepare them for service and how student organizations themselves might get involved in service-learning projects.

After reviewing other service-learning programs, Wright State established two priorities: (a) integrating service-learning into the University College first-year seminar in the fall quarter and (b) offering a two-credit, elective service-learning course in the winter and spring quarters. The use of service-learning was voluntary for University College instructors. Allowing instructors to choose issues to be addressed through service was a definite incentive, and 37 of 78 instructors used service-learning during fall quarter. Approximately 680 students participated in service-learning projects in 2007-2008.

The primary goals for the first-year seminar are to help students adjust to college, achieve academic success, develop and grow personally, and explore their own career development. However, we also wanted to use the course to introduce the concept of service. Projects developed for the fall quarter were termed "service-learning light" and included one-time group and class projects. Service-learning light projects give students a taste of what service-learning is in two- to three-hour time blocks over a three- to four-week period. Course projects are based upon themes drawn from a common reading book for all first-year students. This past year, students read *An Inconvenient Truth* by Al Gore and participated in a variety of service projects, including organizing discussions about global warming with

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students from an English-as-a-Second Language class and teaching children and adult literacy students about the environment. Participants also engaged in service-learning by cleaning-up the neighborhood around a homeless shelter, sorting second-hand clothing donations, creating folded Origami cranes for a peace museum, serving as guides for an event at an Audubon Center, and facilitating a campus light bulb exchange.

The elective service-learning course, *UVC 103: Campus-Community Connections in the First Year*, goes into greater depth than the service-learning light course and introduces students to the community while preparing them for lifelong learning and service. The course goals include educating students on the concepts of community, citizenship, and service, while also teaching them to recognize key social, political, economic, and cultural forces impacting community. Students also learned about the role of nonprofits in community life and developed skills in oral and written communication, teamwork, leadership, and diversity awareness.

Once a framework for the program was in place, the next step involved contacting CBOs for information about potential projects. We found that CBOs were sometimes unclear about the distinction between service-learning and volunteerism, so clarification was often warranted. It was helpful to have a written definition and an outline, such as a course syllabus, to send as a follow-up to phone conversations with CBOs.

Service-learning staff offered a wide range of resources: training

for faculty and/or students, project coordination assistance, development and maintenance of forms, and suggestions on reflection/evaluation methods. These resources proved valuable for both instructors seasoned in service-learning as well as those new to it. For interested instructors, the new service-learning coordinator visited first-year seminar classrooms to explain service-learning and to present a brief orientation on what to expect at the service site. Whenever possible, the training was done with a representative of the partnering CBO.

We asked students and CBO participants to complete standardized evaluation forms to determine what they thought of their service-learning experience. Conversations with students, faculty, and CBO participants also helped determine if the projects succeeded in balancing student learning goals with community needs, and some students also submitted papers reflecting on their experience.

By and large, CBOs were satisfied with the collaboration and held a positive view of Wright State University students. Areas to improve upon included educating students further about organizations' missions and providing community partners with more information about the curricular link.

The most valuable student feedback came in the form of written comments—whether in reflection papers or on the questionnaire. For example, students involved in an energy-saving light bulb exchange project wrote comments such as, "It was a great way to introduce energy saving tips to start fresh in college," or "I learned about new light bulbs and how they were better for our

environment." The course evaluations were not as helpful because not all students who participated in a service-learning project answered the related question and some who did not participate answered the question, in error.

WSU faculty and staff were extremely helpful in building the program by making recommendations based on past experiences with service-learning and civic engagement initiatives. Recommendations were made in the areas of risk management, development of ongoing relationships with local nonprofits, engagement of instructors and students, structure of projects appropriate for University College courses, and the influences of other universities.

When developing the program, best practices from other institutions were helpful in a number of ways. Forms currently in use were based upon forms developed by local institutions, including Sinclair Community College and others across North America. St. Francis Xavier University and West Virginia University provided suggestions on developing the program through phone conversations. WSU's Office of Risk Management was impressed by the system in place at the California State University. Finally, an invaluable resource has been the listserv of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse.

Utilizing the existing framework of our first-year program, we will likely make two key changes:

1. Expand our instructor training. Additional training is necessary in the basics of service-learning, including guidance on linking

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Retention of first-year students not part of the Adventures in Leadership program was equivalent to the retention rate of the first-year class overall (89.8%). Participation appeared to increase retention for male students (93.6% of male participants were retained compared to 89.0% for nonparticipants). The difference between participation and nonparticipation was not as great for women (95.8% vs. 94.0%, respectively). The improved retention rate among participants of AIL indicates the program could be a viable method of improving retention rates from first to second year.

Three students (5.4%) who had participated in the AIL program were no longer registered at Elon at the end of the first year. Reasons for withdrawal include both personal and medical issues; that the school was too small or too far from home were some of the personal reasons that students gave for their choice to leave.

Conclusion

Taking a note from Goodman & Pascarella (2006), it is agreed that there is no substitute for a longitudinal study. The participants in this program need to be tracked to determine if their increased rates of retention and persistence continue beyond the first year. Additionally, other schools that have implemented an outdoor education-based orientation program should track and record their institutional retention rates to determine if outdoor adventure programs influence retention.

For more information, please visit: (www.elon.edu/e-web/students/leadership/adventures/).

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the project with the course goals and facilitation of effective reflection.

2. Plan more small-scale projects. We will continue to work closely with CBOs to ensure that students are engaged the entire time at their service site. In several projects, the CBO did not need as many students as originally planned.

As we established new relationships with CBOs and built upon existing ones, CBOs contacted us with additional needs. Whenever possible, the University Director of Service-Learning will meet these needs by offering relevant courses or by matching student organizations with viable service projects. Beyond the coming year, we will maintain ongoing relationships with CBOs and track students' engagement through their college years and beyond. As the program grows, we hope to see increasing numbers of students engage in service-learning, thereby reinforcing a culture of service consistent with the university's mission.

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What's Happening at the National Resource Center

Conferences

National Conference on First-Year Assessment

October 12 – 14, 2008
San Antonio, TX
To register, visit: www.sc.edu/fye/events/fall08/registration.html

15th National Conference on Students in Transition

November 8 – 10, 2008
Columbia, SC
Register before October 15, 2008 and receive 10% off registration fee
To register, visit: www.sc.edu/fye/events/sit/registration.html

For more information about these and other National Resource Center events, please visit our web site www.sc.edu/fye/events/

Research and Resources

In spring 2008, the National Resource Center conducted a survey of student success and learning centers. The purpose of the survey was to gather information on the nature, practices, and evaluation of student success and learning centers. A preliminary summary of the findings of the survey is available at www.sc.edu/fye/research/surveyfindings/index.html
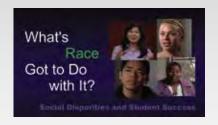
"Creating Instruments to Assess Aspects of the First-Year Experience" by Dr. Laurie Schreiner was published to the FYA-List in mid-August. To view an archived copy of her essay, visit http://nrc.fye.sc.edu/resources/FYAlist/

The National Resource Center is conducting the second National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives. The survey will launch in fall 2008, and a summary of results will be published online in 2009.

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What's Race Got to Do with It? is a short film that chronicles the journey of a diverse group of students participating in a 15-week intergroup dialogue program at U.C. Berkeley. As the students share personal stories, debate hot topics, and confront one another about the role race plays in their lives, they make discoveries about their preconceived ideas and assumptions. The film goes beyond identity politics and celebratory history to help viewers see through achievement myths and shows the way to create a safe space for an open and honest exchange, particularly within educational environments. It illuminates the stark differences that exist between students on the same campus and demonstrates the incremental learning and attitudinal change that can occur over the course of a sustained dialogue. *What's Race Got to Do With It?* can be used productively with students, faculty, staff, and administrators in programs ranging from the first-year experience to professional development and institutional investment policies.

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