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## 2008 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates



Right to left: **George "Jack" Roundy**, Director of Academic Advising, University of Puget Sound; **Steady H. Moono**, Dean of Student Success, Montgomery County Community College; **Russell Lowery-Hart**, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, West Texas A&M University; **Nannette Commander**, Assistant Vice President of Recruitment & Retention; Director of Undergraduate Admissions, Georgia State University; **Carrie Brimhall**, Director, Enrollment Management, Minnesota State Community and Technical College; **Lynita Cooksey**, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Arkansas State University; **James Diedrick**, Associate Dean of the College; Professor of English, Agnes Scott College; **DeLaine Priest**, Assistant Vice President, Student Success Center, University of Central Florida; **M. Stuart Hunter**, Assistant Vice Provost, National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition/University 101 Program; **Shani Fisher**, Sponsoring Editor, Student Success Programs, Houghton Mifflin Company; Not pictured: **Robert H. Garvey**, Associate Professor of Physics, College of the Holy Cross; **Alison Ridley**, Dean of Academic Services, Associate Professor of Spanish;

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience® and Students in Transition and Houghton Mifflin Company announced the 10 educators who were selected as the 2008 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates at the 27th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience® in San Francisco, California.

These 10 educators share a common goal of improving the educational experience for entering college students. They have been awarded this distinction for their exceptional work on behalf of first-year students and for the impact their efforts have on the students and culture of their institutions. Their achievements can be viewed at <http://sc.edu/fye/centerinitiative/advocates/currentyear/index.html>

## Centering on Student Success

Student success is an important focus for institutions of higher education. Historically, this focus has targeted students' academic success, but in recent years, a new one-stop shop has emerged. Often called student success centers (SSC), these offices provide a variety of services—including academic support services, counseling, and mentoring—under one umbrella to aid student learning, achievement, and success in and out of the classroom.

Recently, the National Resource Center informally surveyed 79 institutions about student success centers on their campuses. Of those respondents, 94.9% reported the existence of a student success center. These centers are often referred to by a variety of names, including learning centers and academic success centers. Survey data also show that these centers are relatively recent additions to higher education. While

the philosophies, individual units, and separate departments that make up student success centers have been around for almost half a century, nearly 60% of survey respondents said their centers have opened since 1990. Thirty-one percent said their centers were established within the last seven years. In spring 2008, the National Resource Center plans to conduct a formal survey on student success centers and what they contribute to students' academic, emotional, and social transitions in college.

Among the respondents of the initial e-mail survey, the student success centers at four universities—

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*A tutor works one-on-one with a student at the University of South Carolina's Student Success Center.*

Creighton University (Nebraska), Baylor University (Texas), Mount Olive College (North Carolina), and West Texas A&M University—are notable for employing one or more of the following strategies: (a) focusing on retention and persistence, (b) maintaining a collaborative organizational structure, (c) encouraging faculty involvement, and (d) centering on assessment.

### **Focusing on Retention and Persistence**

Creighton University's Office of Student Success (OSS) was formally established in spring 2007 to focus institutional efforts on increasing student retention and persistence rates. Providing a variety of services from one convenient location allows for a better focus on students' holistic development. The three-handed approach, which involves aiding students in their academic, educational, and social success, helps students become connected to the institution and helps improve student retention and persistence.



*Students working during a Supplemental Instruction session at the University of South Carolina's Student Success Center.*

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# The Big Picture

## Joe Cuseo

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## First-Year Program Delivery: Effective Principles and Exemplary Practices

In the previous edition of this column, seven principles of powerful program delivery were defined and documented with supporting research. This column attempts to illustrate and demonstrate how these principles of effective program delivery may be converted into practice.

### Principles of Effective Program Delivery

**1. Intentional (Purposeful).** Effective programs are intentionally student-centered and deliberately designed to promote student success. They are characterized by a conscious and conscientious attempt to implement research-based principles that have been empirically associated with positive student outcomes. Intentional programming implements one or more of the well-supported principles of student success described in previous issues of this column (i.e., it promotes students' personal validation, self-efficacy, sense of meaning or purpose, active involvement or engagement, social integration, personal reflection, and self-awareness). Colleges and universities were not originally designed and organized with these research-based principles of student success in mind. The emergence of first-year pro-

grams could be seen as an attempt to intentionally redesign undergraduate education as a more student-centered and success-promoting experience.

**2. Proactive.** Effective programming takes early and preventative action to address students' educational needs and adjustment issues—intercepting potential problems before they require reactive intervention. First-year practices that successfully implement this principle include: (a) summer-transition programs (e.g., summer bridge, common reading), (b) preorientation contact (e.g., from a peer leader or academic advisor), (c) early-alert systems, and (d) first-year seminars. Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates (2005) identified characteristics of institutions with higher-than-predicted graduation rates and reported that they are “especially good at effectively front-loading multiple resources to help students learn what it takes to succeed” (p. 268).

**3. Intrusive.** Effective programming reaches out to students, delivering support to them, rather than passively waiting and hoping that they will seek it out on their own. Practices that implement this principle include (a) delivering support programs and

services to places where students congregate, such as the student union and student residences (e.g., living-learning centers and residential learning communities), (b) infusing support services directly into the classroom (e.g., through Supplemental Instruction and course-integrated library instruction), (c) requiring advisor contact as a prerequisite for course registration, and (d) requiring students to use support services (e.g., course assignment in the first-year seminar). Rather than relying on student self-selection and allowing some students to “fall through the cracks,” a program that is intrusive is inclusive—it includes all new students and ensures that all of them experience the program's benefits. Gardner (2003) contends that “we are very reluctant to use the authority we have to compel students to do some of the things we know are better for them if only they will do them. A best practice would be to mandate participation in more of these interventions” (p. 12).

**4. Diversified.** Effective programming is customized to meet the distinctive needs of students from different subpopulations and at different stages of the college experience. Diversified program delivery exhibits flexibility that accommodates diverse student groups, such as (a) commuter students—e.g., keeping commuters in the information loop via commuter message boards, newsletters, hot lines, or web pages; (b) undecided students—e.g., giving them an advising home akin to an academic department for declared students; and (c) transfer students—e.g., providing them with a transfer-student orientation program rather than lumping them indiscriminately into orientation programs designed for students transitioning from

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**CUSEO** Cont. from p. 3

high school. Diversified programming also customizes support for students at different stages of their first-year experience, sequentially addressing the new-student transition (a) into college—e.g., convocation, (b) through the first term—e.g., first-year seminar, and (c) throughout the first year—e.g., end-of-year awards ceremonies or rituals.

5. *Collaborative*. Effective programming involves cooperative partnerships among different organizational units of the college that work interdependently in a complementary, coordinated, and cohesive fashion. Successful support programs are distinguished by cross-functional relationships that involve collaboration between (a) faculty and academic-support specialists—e.g., early-alert systems and course-integrated learning assistance programs; (b) academic and student affairs professionals—e.g., jointly conducted orientation-and-convocation programs and living-learning centers; (c) colleges and schools—e.g., coordinated summer bridge and high school outreach programs; and (d) different members of the college community—e.g., faculty, staff, and student representation on key campus committees. Rather than engaging in “turf wars,” collaborative programs combine to form a comprehensive network of complementary initiatives that generate synergy and eliminate redundancy. At institutions with higher-than-predicted graduation rates, considerable synergy existed across programs: “The sum of their collective impact on student performance was greater than the influence of any single practice” (Kuh et al., 2005, p. 284).

6. *Centralized*. Effective programming occupies a central place in the col-

lege’s organizational structure, giving it the capacity to exert pervasive and systemic effects. Effective programs are situated “front and center,” i.e., they are highly visible and centrally positioned. For instance, a three-unit first-year seminar offered as a “core” course in the general education curriculum is more visible and central than a one-unit seminar offered for elective credit. As Kuh (2005) argues, “If we believe something is important, the curriculum should feature it and we should require students to experience it” (p. 102). Centralization also serves to promote the durability and long-term “institutionalization” of the program. In contrast, first-year seminars that are add-ons and loosely coupled to the curriculum are less likely to survive (Barefoot, 2000).

7. *Empirical (Evidentiary)*. Effective programming is supported and driven by assessment data that are used to “sum up” and prove the program’s overall impact and to “shape up” and continuously improve the program. Empirically driven programs assess diverse student outcomes, including (a) affective outcomes—e.g., student perceptions of program effectiveness and self-reported impact on personal development; (b) behavioral outcomes—e.g., student involvement and retention; and (c) cognitive outcomes—e.g., student gains in knowledge, critical thinking, and self-beliefs. Empirically based programs also disaggregate assessment results to evaluate the program’s impact on different student subpopulations.

**Conclusion**

An in-depth study of state universities with significantly higher-than-expected graduation rates revealed that “programmatically practices played a very important role on the successful campuses, but it is not just doing the

right things that matter. How those things are done makes all the difference. At the successful campuses, intentional, integrated, collaborative programmatic activity was reported over and over” (American Association of State Colleges & Universities, 2005, p. 4). These findings suggest that promoting student success depends not only putting effective programs into place but also on how they are put into practice. The seven principles of program delivery cited in this article may serve as a rubric for guiding effective delivery of first-year programs and assessing them.

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Similar motivations set the standard for the Paul L. Foster Success Center (FSC) at Baylor University, which seeks to raise retention rates to 93% as part of the Baylor 2012 initiative. Additionally, each of the four institutions' student success centers focus on holistic student development. As Dr. Brandon Miller, assistant vice president of student success at Baylor University, acknowledges, "student success doesn't occur in a vacuum," but instead is the result of a complex process of student activities in and out of the classroom. Thus, attention to promoting success must begin from the moment students arrive on campus.

**Maintaining Collaborative Organizational Structure**

While Creighton, Baylor, West Texas A&M, and Mount Olive all use a variety of services to assist their students, each center and its staff believe that a key step in institutionalizing student success is bringing together administrators, faculty, peer educators, and students. Perhaps this increased emphasis on collaboration is best illustrated in the institutional organization of student success centers. Findings from the National Resource Center informal survey indicate that, depending on the institution, a student success center can be housed in a variety of locations: academic affairs – 39.7%, student affairs – nearly 29%, enrollment management – 4.1%. This organizational structure enables student success centers to integrate a variety of services already existing at the college or university, not only providing students with a one-stop shop for services, but also encouraging better collaboration and

educational partnerships among the different areas.

At Mount Olive College, the Student Success Center, which includes the Career Center and the Teaching and Learning Center, recently moved from the Professional Studies Office, housed in academic affairs, to the Department of Student Development's Enrichment Office. This strategic relocation allows staff and administrators to collaborate and communicate with the admissions office, financial aid counselors, residential life staff, and other offices across the University.

**Encouraging Faculty Involvement**

In addition to administrative collaboration, strong relationships with faculty are also an important component of student success centers. Baylor University's Foster Success Center has established a Building Bridges Committee, intended to foster a team dynamic among the Center and other divisions of academic affairs and student life. "By hosting open houses and showing others the important role we all play in students' academic and social success, we hope to encourage partnerships and relationships with departments throughout the university," said Dr. Miller.

Similarly, the Student Success Center at West Texas A&M University has also benefited from collaboration with four full-time faculty and 15 faculty advising fellows, who spend 10 hours a week advising students. These key players bring a unique academic perspective to the services and programs organized within the center, helping to maintain the balance of focus between success in and out of the classroom. According to Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, associate vice president for academic

affairs, integrating faculty into the mission of the center helps dispel any element of "distrust that sometimes exists between faculty and advisors." Perhaps most importantly, the collaboration ensures students receive more efficient advising and better overall service from the university.

**Centering Assessment**

As student success centers continue to grow in number and popularity, so does the need for assessment of services provided at the centers. Like many centers, those at Baylor, Creighton, Mount Olive, and West Texas A&M are in the early stages of research. As a result, the majority of assessment is limited to student tracking. The Paul L. Foster Success Center uses the Sungard Higher Education Banner System, a software program designed for management, tracking, and retention, to keep tabs on the various resources students are using. Not only does this provide information and guidance into the development and continuing improvement of the center's programs, staff and administrators have a comprehensive view of each student and their use of services to ensure that students' needs are being met in the most effective ways.

West Texas A&M also tracks service usage and asks for student feedback through online surveys that are e-mailed each time a student visits the center. Institutions are continuously working to establish even more formalized assessments of services, programs, and student success. Creighton University's Office of Student Success (OSS) has already begun collecting benchmark data (such as grade point average and

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## Transfer Transitions: Through the Eyes of Students

The paths followed by today's college students are as diverse as the students themselves.

Increasingly, those paths include transferring between many types of colleges and universities—both two- and four-year. The traditional vertical progression through a single four-year institution is no longer the norm. Being able to identify these paths and understanding why they were chosen will assist both community colleges and four-year universities in smoothing the transition process for transfer students.

One common pathway is for students to enter higher education through a two-year institution and later transfer to a four-year institution. As part of my doctoral dissertation, I investigated the perceptions of transfer students while they were actively engaged in the transfer process. Fifty-seven incoming community college transfer students were interviewed in a large metropolitan area through e-journaling during fall 2006 and spring 2007. The research gathered in this qualitative study was used to pilot a broader study being conducted by the Urban Transfer Research Network (UTRN), a project funded through the Lumina Foundation for Education.

Students were interviewed via e-mail conversations at two- to three-week intervals. The study was carried out in three stages. In the first stage, 27 students were interviewed while still enrolled at community college and were asked, "What do you expect

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to occur at the university that will be significant in your transfer process?" The second stage of interviewing was conducted during the first eight weeks of the semester, and students were asked, "What has occurred that is significant to you in your transfer adjustment process?" During this stage, an additional 30 incoming community college transfer students joined the study. The third stage of interviews was conducted after all 57 students had completed their first 12 weeks of classes at the university. They were asked, "What changes would you recommend to better accommodate transfer students?"

Stage 1 findings revealed that all of the students were concerned about the academic environment, specifically, how it would be different from the community college. Additionally, most of the students, 93%, were concerned about fitting into the university culture. One student said,

Right now, I am overwhelmed at the size of [the university], and I am sure that I will be lost. Hopefully, I will start to see some of the same people everyday and it will start to become a smaller community in a larger setting.

Upon initial entry to the university, students reported facing several challenges: 60% of students said they experienced feelings of marginality; 92% said they struggled with their need for guidance and their right to better "customer service" from the university. One student wrote:

As a transfer student to [the university], I found myself starting the semester with more questions than answers. No one said, "Hey, if you have any problems or questions about what something is, where to go, or how to use something or find something, call me."

Learning to navigate the system was a challenge for 65% of the students. One student said, "There is so much red tape even the easy stuff turns into an ordeal." Another student had this to say:

I had a hard time setting up my [Blackboard]account, and the help desk said, "Did you watch all of the tutorials?" If I had time to spend hours on the web watching tutorials, I probably wouldn't have been there asking for help.

In stage 2, students discussed supports and barriers encountered after transferring and beginning classes at the university. Among the supports that students perceived as needed for a successful adjustment were (a) personal attention, 95%; (b) academic integration, 88%; (c) technology (support for their use of), 67%; and (d) social interaction, 51%. As a barrier to the transfer process,

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## TRANSFER Cont. from p. 6

86% of students identified poor communication in and between academic institutions.

In stage 3, students offered specific recommendations for a successful transfer, including the need for transfer advisors, 49%; transfer orientations, 49%; and a transfer checklist with step-by-step procedures to follow for academic and personal transition, 27%. Additionally, 35% of students reported understanding successful transfer as a process that entailed embracing personal responsibility:

College is not a goal; it is a path for me.

I thought I had a successful transfer when I was sitting in class during the first week of the semester, but now I know that the transfer isn't successful until the day I graduate.

From this study, it was clear that students wanted help with their initial transfer adjustment to the four-year institution. The students did not perceive a lack of information available; rather, they felt there was inadequate support to help them locate the information. Having transfer counselors available at both the community college and the university may increase perceived access to information and help students have more realistic expectations. While the institutions do not need to duplicate services, they do need personnel available to direct students to the proper resources. For example, university transfer counselors can give talks on community college campuses where they explain how transfer credits are

evaluated and how the registration process works. This might help to ease the discomfort students expressed as shown in terms of feelings of marginality and need for personal attention, themes that emerged from this study. Having transfer counselors on both the community college and university ends could help students have more realistic expectations.

In the study, students repeatedly demonstrated that they wanted "someone to call their own." A transfer student office with identifiable support personnel whom students could rely on from the initial application process through graduation could provide the kind of direct, personal help students seek.

Understanding students' perceptions should not be underestimated. With the developed system of community colleges in many states and the increasing commitment to transfer and articulation, this area of research is vital. Additional data would provide a wealth of information for practitioners serving as academic advisors and for institutions looking to implement programs and services to support transfer persistence and success.

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## eSOURCE FOR COLLEGE TRANSITIONS

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## Using Transformative Learning Theory to Advise Student-Athletes

Student-athletes often enter the college environment struggling to balance and acknowledge two very complex parts of their identity—the college student and the athlete. The identity conflict stems from the student's own beliefs about what it means to be a college student. Many student-athletes, especially if they are at-risk academically, may not see themselves as college students but as athletes. When the athletic identity is emphasized, it leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes of student-athletes as academically unequal, unintelligent, and socially impotent (Watt & Moore, 2001). Using the framework of transformative learning, academic advisors can play a critical role in helping student-athletes blend their identities and succeed in college.

Transformational learning starts with some sort of disorienting dilemma. A challenge could come from the questions of another person, from an event or new experience, or from a change in context (Cranton, 1994). In the case of the student-athlete, this dilemma could be the act of attending college and facing the dual identity. Transformative learning theory focuses on how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have assimilated from others (Mezirow, 2000).

### Phases of Transformative Learning

After experiencing the initial dilemma, learners engage in self-examination; critical assessment of assumptions; and the exploration of options for new roles, relationships,

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and actions. The next phases of the process involve planning a course of action, acquiring skills and knowledge for implementing the plan, and trying on new roles (Mezirow, 2000). As an academic coordinator for student-athletes at Duke University, I work with football student-athletes to help them navigate their college experience and become integrated into the college environment. I typically meet with each student twice a week to focus on academic work. The specific focus on the student's academic identity is necessary in order to combat the student's

usual focus on his or her athletic identity. The first meeting early in the week concentrates on the student's upcoming assignments. Together we make a plan for the student to complete the work that is due during the week ahead. The second meeting not only takes time to check-in on the student's progress on assignments, but to also make sure the student has an opportunity to discuss the successes and obstacles faced during the week.

The goal of these advising sessions is to create more positive ways for student-athletes to think about academics and to view their own academic abilities. The research conducted by Pizzolato (2006) suggests that advisors may need to explain not only the elements of success but also provide tips on avoiding failure. These students often lack the experience of academic success in their own lives,

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*Kathryn King, academic coordinator of Duke University Athletics, tutors football player Patrick Egboh.*



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which interferes with the development of an identity as a college student. Lack of effort, ineffective studying, and test anxiety can be discussed to help students avoid reliance on self-disabling excuses and the continued development of poor academic identity (Gaston-Gayles, 2005). Advisors can help students learn the communication, interpersonal, and study skills necessary for success, but they must also help students identify potential challenges to their successes (Pizzolatto). The meetings with students are designed to help student-athletes take control of their learning.

### Advisor Role

The partnership between the advisor and student goes beyond basic course scheduling to planning a relationship that fosters personal development and growth (Bland, 2004). The relationship built between the advisor and advisee needs to be based on trust and developed over time, particularly since the transformation process will involve risk-taking on the part of the student. An advisor cannot tell students how to move through a transformative experience in their learning, but they can encourage learning experiences that provide incrementally structured supervised practice in moving toward generating one's own ideas about his or her academic career (Ignelzi, 2000).

The relationship with an academic advisor provides an avenue to assist student-athletes in developing their academic identity.

The last phase of the transformation results in the building of competence and self-confidence in the new role, in this case, the role as a learner and college student. When the student makes this last transition, he no longer

needs to meet with an advisor multiple times a week. The student has changed in ways that allow him to become more autonomous and equips him to negotiate the college environment without such intense support.

The relationship with an academic advisor provides an avenue to assist student-athletes in developing their academic identity. Using transformative lens, advisors are in a position to help student-athletes develop an academic identity and contribute to their success in school. Accompanying students along this difficult journey can help them address multiple dimensions of their development that mediate their ability to meet the learning expectations they face in college (Baxter Magolda, 2000).

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### Related articles in E-Source

Eggleston, T., & Mitchell, J. (2005). Addressing student-athlete issues in a first-year seminar. **2(4), 6.**

## Spreading the Word About Disability Support Services

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Students with disabilities who choose to register with Disability Support Services (DSS) make up approximately 9% of the student population at Roger Williams University, a private, four-year institution in Bristol, Rhode Island. Services and accommodations are available to students with documented disabilities that substantially limit a major life activity such as learning, hearing, seeing, reading, walking, and speaking.

DSS provides a range of services, including extended time for test taking; testing in the DSS testing center; note-taking assistance; priority registration; individual, strategy-based tutorial/consultation; supplemental academic advising, and referrals to other campus resources. The goal of DSS is to provide equal access to educational and cocurricular programs and campus activities to qualified individuals with disabilities. However, we found that students, parents, and faculty lacked information regarding disability support procedures in the higher education environment. Students were ill-equipped to meet our transition expectations, parents

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## COMMUNICATION CALENDAR BREAKDOWN

### LATE SUMMER

- *Self Advocacy 101*. An informational session for first-year and transfer students with disabilities to learn about DSS policies and procedures, deadlines, request forms, and the accommodation process. Generally offered the day before classes start in the fall semester.
- *New Faculty Training*. This session introduces new faculty to their role as instructors and academic advisors at Roger Williams University. DSS staff are invited to present an introduction to the Center for Academic Development (CAD) and DSS as part of new faculty orientation to the University.
- *Inquiries from prospective students*. While parent inquiries come in year-round, juniors and seniors in high school contact DSS when they begin the college search process. First-time calls receive the general informational e-mail with attachments of policies, procedures, and documentation requirements.

### EARLY FALL

- *Open House*. This is a campus-wide event offered twice in the fall for prospective students and families at which DSS and CAD present two, hour-long informational sessions.
- *University Acceptance Packets*. In concert with admissions, a DSS informational flyer and fact sheet is included in all university acceptance packages.
- *DSS Information Handbook*. Provided to all new students upon first meeting – contains policies and procedures, forms, and guidelines.

### LATE FALL & WINTER

- *Faculty E-mail Alert*. DSS sends all faculty e-mail regarding accommodation processes for upcoming December final exams.
- *Faculty Brown-Bag Lunch*. DSS hosts an overview/Q & A refresher for issues faculty may be seeing in their classes.
- *New DSS Transfer Student Orientation*. This involves outreach to students and families of January arrivals to assist in their transition to the University.

### EARLY SPRING

- *Accepted Students' Day (ASD)*. This is an opportunity to meet accepted DSS students as they go through the final decision-making process. ASD occurs four times throughout the spring semester.
- *Inquiries From Prospective Students*. These are mostly parent inquiries, but we also take inquiries from high school juniors and seniors.
- *Informational e-mail*. This is sent to all first inquiries with attachments of policies, procedures, and documentation requirements.
- *Faculty E-Mail Alert*. DSS sends e-mail regarding accommodation processes for upcoming May final exams.

### EARLY SUMMER

- *New Student and Family Orientation*. DSS hosts a two-hour informational session for parents only to introduce DSS services, policies and procedures, and accommodations and to discuss how things work in the higher education environment. The parental transition process starts in earnest here.
- *Update the DSS section of Center for Academic Development's Web Site*. This ensures that all DSS policies, procedures, documentation requirements, and fact sheets are up-to-date.

## **DISABILITY** Cont. from p. 11

thought it would be like high school, and faculty members weren't sure of their rights and responsibilities. For years, information had been disseminated in a reactive, not proactive fashion; we were communicating without a master plan.

We found that even our own university (i.e., support staff, admissions counselors, adjunct faculty) didn't know enough about DSS and the services we offer. To solve this problem, we revisited three key communication strategies and redesigned them to more effectively facilitate students' transition experiences and to enhance our information dissemination efforts.

First, we enhanced our use of electronic communication methods to support transition and information sharing. E-mail distribution lists were created for all registered DSS students. Students receive informational messages, announcements, policy updates, and deadlines for requests. DSS also sends information on policy updates, announcements, reminders, and accommodation notices to faculty throughout the academic year. An e-mail response containing DSS overview and attachments of policies, procedures, and documentation requirements was also prepared as a way to follow up on phone inquiries.

Next, we created a communication calendar that highlights communication opportunities throughout the year. (For a breakdown of the calendar, see the sidebar, Communication Calendar).

Finally, we organized individual meetings with students throughout the year. All meetings are student-initiated and provide regular opportunities to discuss academics and monitor

students' progress and transition experiences. We also complete ongoing reviews of the accommodation process and students' role within the process. Moreover, we teach students to be self-advocates, to take the lead in ensuring their own success by seeking out the services they need.

These strategies have resulted in a more successful and realistic transition to higher education for students with disabilities and for their parents. We have witnessed a higher level of understanding among students, parents, and faculty regarding DSS procedures and our role in the lives of our students. Although we have not yet formally assessed our efforts, the number of telephone calls for general information from students, parents, and faculty have been reduced significantly, which indicates that electronic communication and other efforts are providing the bulk of the information needed to use DSS's services.

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### **Related articles in E-Source**

Hadley, W., & Raisch, D. (2004). Institutional commitment regarding students with learning disabilities transitioning to higher education, **2(3), 4**.

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**SUCCESS** Cont. from p. 5

retention rates) to determine the OSS's impact on student success.

**Conclusion**

As one of the newest initiatives on university and college campuses, student success centers are proving their own success in aiding student engagement and achievement in and out of the classroom. As illustrated at Baylor University, Creighton University, Mount Olive College, and West Texas A&M University, inter-institutional collaboration with faculty, academic affairs administrators, and student affairs professionals is a key component to providing students with services, programs, and initiatives to foster student success in college. With increasing interest in student retention and persistence, tracking and assessment of the services provided by centers are also becoming important. As administrators, faculty, and staff continue to develop new and innovative ways to provide support for student learning and development, these centers will continue to center on student success.

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## E-SOURCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

**Audience:** *E-Source* readers include academic and student affairs administrators and faculty from a variety of fields interested in student transitions. All types of institutions are represented in the readership.

**Style:** A limited number of feature-length stories will be interspersed with shorter research briefs or news items. Tables, figures, and artwork will be included on a space-available basis. Limited references can be printed. Articles, tables, figures, and references should adhere to APA (American Psychological Association) style. Annotations of new resources should include the following: complete title of the publication, author(s) or editor(s), publisher, publication date, and complete URL if source is available online. *E-Source* does not publish endorsements of products for sale.

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**Submissions Deadlines:** For the May issue, the deadline is March 18; for the July issue, the deadline is May 21.

Please address all questions and submissions to:

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## A Mentor's Stake In Retention

**Barbara Knox**

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In a recent evaluation of the Tennessee Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (TLSAMP), a statewide program aimed at recruiting and retaining undergraduate students of color in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), both students and faculty found faculty mentoring to be the most important resource offered. Comprised of six Tennessee institutes of higher learning, TLSAMP was funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 2002 with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of minority STEM students in graduate programs and the professoriate.

The evaluation was intended to assess the effectiveness of TLSAMP, examine it as a possible model of success, and assess what students and faculty perceive as useful retention programs. Data were collected from 144 students and 30 faculty/administrators from five of the six institutions in the alliance. While TLSAMP offers a number of resources, including tutoring, research opportunities, seminars, counseling, Supplemental Instruction, and social networking, both students and faculty ranked faculty mentoring as the most useful resource. (see Table 1). This contradicted our expectations. We had expected students to rank tutorials highest because they seem to use that service often; and we expected faculty to rank research highest because that is, generally, an area of great importance to faculty. But, given the research on the positive impact of mentoring on retention, especially for students of color, the evaluation results make sense.

Mentoring is defined as a relationship between an experienced person and a junior person who wishes to learn what the experienced person knows (Lee, 1999). Wallace, Abel, and Ropers-Huilman (2000) believed the definition could expand to include networks of support rather than just one-on-one interactions. At all higher education levels, mentoring programs have shown some rates of success in increasing the number of students of color (Payton, 2004). Relationships with faculty were associated with better performance in school, and students who received mentoring felt a greater sense of obligation to remain in school. Many graduates indicated their greatest

Table 1  
Student Perceptions of Usefulness of Resources ( $N = 144$ )

Resource	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Tutorials	139	3.95	1.10
Research	127	3.71	1.27
Seminars	127	3.89	1.06
Faculty Mentoring	139	4.08	1.16
Peer Mentoring	127	3.74	1.18
Social Gatherings	127	3.95	1.06
Counseling	119	3.82	1.11
Supplemental Instruction	119	3.64	1.19

fortune was finding a mentor with whom they built a positive relationship (Lynch, 2001).

Mentors provide students with support, understanding, and positive role modeling. Mentors motivate and drive students to reach the next level of success. By providing students with academic, career-related, and psychosocial assistance, mentors offer personalized attention to minority students, assisting students as they deal with the everyday problems they may encounter in the college and university environment (Hurte, 2002). These relationships reduce the negative impact of barriers to successful college participation (Wallace et al., 2000), especially since faculty mentors are perceived to have the authority, know-how, and power to maneuver systemic obstacles.

The mentors for TLSAMP are faculty volunteers in the STEM disciplines. Students generally are assigned to mentors based on their academic majors. Because the students often outnumber the faculty volunteers, some students are matched with mentors outside of their academic majors. One of the elements of TLSAMP's program that works well is the informality of the mentoring relationship. Faculty and students have no preplanned or preassigned activities but are left to map out their interactions. However, students are required to document time spent with their mentors as well as all other activities related to the TLSAMP program. Receiving financial aid depends, in part, on the amount of participation the student completes in all areas of the program. In TLSAMP, faculty mentors receive financial supplements, funding for travel, and/or supplies.

One student in TLSAMP's evaluation said, "I like the fact that the program assigns mentors because in most cases the advice they give you not only helps you with school, but it can

See MENTOR, p. 15

## What's Happening at the National Resource Center

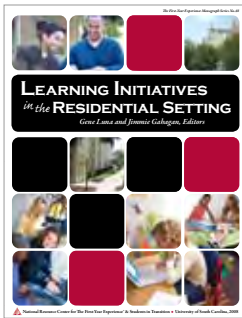
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Monograph No. 48

### Learning Initiatives in the Residential Setting

Gene Luna and Jimmie Gahagan, Editors



*Learning Initiatives in the Residential Setting* highlights the educational potential of residence halls and provides a framework for how educators at large universities and small colleges alike can think more holistically about student learning and development. Chapters trace the history of learning in residence halls, discuss academic and student affairs partnerships to support student learning, describe a range of current learning initiatives, offer a typology of living-learning programs and principles for establishing such programs, and discuss the impact of architectural design on student learning. (2008). ISBN 978-1-889-27159-0. \$35.00

Monograph No. 49

### Exploring the Evidence: Initiatives in the First College Year

Wendy G. Troxel and Marc Cutright, Editors



For more than 25 years, educators have developed and institutionalized efforts to help first-year students succeed. *Exploring the Evidence: Initiatives in the First College Year* celebrates those efforts by sharing case studies from 22 institutions that have created programs and initiatives to support their first-year students. The programs range from encouraging civic engagement and academic achievement to institutional structures that aid in the delivery of programs to entering students. Modeled on the popular *Exploring the Evidence* series on first-year seminars, the cases provide institutional context, program descriptions, and research findings that can help guide practice. (2008). ISBN 978-1-889-27160-6. \$35.00.

Monograph No. 3

### The First-Year Experience in American Higher Education: An Annotated Bibliography, 4th edition

Andrew K. Koch, Editor-in-Chief  
Stephanie M. Foote, Sara E. Hinkle,  
Jennifer R. Keup, and Matthew D. Pistilli, Editors



A newly revised edition of *The First-Year Experience in American Higher Education* catalogues the last decade of evidence-based and reflective publications on the first year of college and on practices designed to support student learning and success. Published by the National Resource Center and the American College Personnel Association, this monograph includes introductory essays that describe the general shape of research on the first college year. Key words and a topical index help readers find relevant research on questions of interest. (2007). ISBN 978-1-889-27158-3. \$40.00

See HAPPENINGS, p. 15

**HAPPENINGS** Cont. from p. 14

## Conferences

### The Institute for First-Year Seminar Leadership

April 13 – 15, 2008

Charleston, South Carolina

This event, the first of its kind sponsored by the National Resource Center, is designed to support those involved in first-year seminars. Sessions have been designed for active learning through group work, problem solving, and case studies. Topics include a discussion of the history and status of first-year seminars, seeking funding, assessment, and focused teaching strategies. Participants will create a personalized action plan for use on their home campuses.

### Summer Institute for Academic Deans and Department Chairs

July 20 – 22, 2008

Asheville, North Carolina

This institute is designed to promote discussion of current challenges and provide successful strategies in the curriculum and cocurriculum. Participants will have the opportunity to share the trials and successes related to the role of academic deans and department chairs, engage with colleagues, and examine trends and best practices.

For more information about these and other National Resource Center events, please visit our web site [www.sc.edu/fye/events/](http://www.sc.edu/fye/events/)

## Research

### Research Grant Opportunity Available

The National Resource Center is pleased to announce the 2008-2009 Paul P. Fidler Research Grant

competition. With a comprehensive award package that includes a \$5,000 stipend, travel to two national conferences, and priority consideration for publication, the Fidler Grant supports the development and dissemination of original research with the potential to have a national impact on college student success. The deadline for submissions is July 1, 2008. For additional details go to <http://www.sc.edu/fye/research/grant/index.html>

### Listserv Essay Series Relunched

The National Resource Center has relaunched the First-Year Assessment (FYA) listserv essay series. The FYA listserv is an online magazine that features, brief invited essays on assessment topics applicable to first-year programs and student development. Featured essays focus on assessment of a technical college to four-year college bridge program, using writing as an assessment tool, the impact of the Teaching Teams Program on student outcomes, and much more.

To receive the FYA essay series, please subscribe to the FYA listserv at <http://www.sc.edu/fye/listservs/subscribe.html>.

**MENTOR** Cont. from p. 13

be applied to life and the many situations one may encounter." A faculty member had this to say: I like "interacting with students because this gives the student the impression that someone really is interested in his/her success."

As colleges and universities seek out and develop programs aimed at retaining students of color, not only in the STEM disciplines, but in others as well, they should begin with mentoring.

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## Related articles in E-Source

- Davis, E., & Strand, D. (2007). Increasing retention in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, **4(6), 1**.