E-SOURCE 5.5

Program Helps Veterans Transition From Soldiers to Students

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Today, far fewer veterans are in college on the national Montgomery GI Bill—an outgrowth of the GI Bill of Rights signed into law in 1944 by President Franklin Roosevelt. Reportedly, between 1985 and 1994, only 8% or 52,000 of the 641,000 eligible veterans used all of their GI Bill tuition benefits (veterans have up to 10 years to use their education benefits). In the last three years, even as funding has increased, more money has gone unused. In 2007, the GI Bill was funded at more than $2 billion—up from $1.98 billion in 2006—but an estimated $816 million of that money went unused.

As veterans emerge from potentially traumatic military experiences, their transition from soldier to student is difficult in many respects. John Schupp, the director of Supportive Education for the Returning Veteran (SERV) at Cleveland State University, has identified three common barriers: (a) veteran-students often do not relate to the average first-year student; (b) the bureaucratic barriers inherent in navigating both the Veterans Administration (VA) and the university often prove too overwhelming for veterans, many of whom suffer from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and (c) the cost of tuition at a growing number of institutions exceeds the individual GI tuition benefit, only about $37,200 for four years of study.

In fall 2007, Cleveland State University (CSU) launched SERV to improve enrollment and retention of young military veterans, especially those returning from active service in Iraq and Afghanistan. The program offers an army of support, including exclusive vets-only first-year classes, mentoring and tutoring from former soldiers, and affordable tuition that doesn't exceed the GI Bill education benefit.

The University of Arizona—where the graduation rate among GI Bill veteran-students is less than 15%—launched a similar program in January with seven students. There, SERV is a cohort-based curriculum that includes four credit-bearing courses aimed at increasing retention and the graduation rate of veteran-students by teaching them how to succeed in academic settings. The courses are (a) Academic Readiness Success Skills; (b) Leadership, which helps students translate their military skills to the outside world and determine what learning strategies work best for them; (c) Research and Information Literacy, which focuses on helping vets become intelligent consumers of information; and (d) Hardiness and Resiliency, which addresses stress management strategies, conflict management skills, goal planning, and health and wellness.

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This course is cotaught by a university professor and a clinical psychologist at the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System who also treats vets who have PTSD. "Our end goal is for [veteran-students] to get a college degree, not to have a college experience," said Terri Riffe, director of the University Teaching Center where the program is housed.

SERV has drawn media attention, and, as a result, almost a dozen other universities are considering bringing similar programs to their campuses. This interest spurred Schupp, who also teaches chemistry at CSU, to co-author federal legislation that would establish the SERV Act and provide funding to considerably expand the program in size and scope.

The U.S. Senate bill would encourage universities to set up Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success—single points of contact that coordinate comprehensive support services for veteran-students, including admissions, registration, financial aid, veterans benefits, academic advising, student health, personal or mental health counseling, career advising, and disability services. Grant money would also allow universities to monitor rates of enrollment, persistence, and completion among veteran-students and would offer support for veterans-only classes and other methods designed to ease the transition of vets. The bill could be decided on as early as this summer.

Breaking Down Barriers

At CSU, veterans-only classes are the antidote for veterans who view the traditional classroom setting as a landmine, especially the large lecture-

John Schupp, chemistry professor and director of SERV (Supportive Education for the Returning Veteran) at Cleveland State University, teaches a chemistry class exclusively for military veterans—one of several classes designed to help ease the college transition of veteran-students. Photo courtesy of John Schupp.

style courses with more than 100 students from multicultural backgrounds, including those of countries where veteran-students may have been in combat. Veteran-students have difficulty knowing and understanding whom to trust, Schupp said. This is unlike in the 1940s when the first wave of post World-War II veterans successfully went to university on the GI Bill. Then, the majority of college students were American vets. Thus, veteran-students had an automatic support network.

The vets-only classes at CSU are smaller and naturally more collaborative, recreating the camaraderie of the military unit, Schupp said. As soldiers, veterans were trained to work together to survive, Schupp notes, but often in traditional classrooms, education is personal and there is less teamwork.

Cleveland State sophomore Josh Miller, 28—a disabled army veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan—said the vets-only classes make him feel safer and more relaxed, in part because he is learning alongside students who have shared experiences. "I mean, it's not like me and these guys are childhood friends," said Miller, who has PTSD. "But the

majority of them have all seen combat. They've seen how bad things can get. I think these classes make it more conducive for veterans to learn."

Miller, a biology and chemistry major who plans to attend medical school, took Schupp's first chemistry class for vets-only. Schupp handpicked two other interested professors to teach vets-only biology and history. The professors seek ways to make instruction relevant to the students' military experience, Schupp said, (e.g. giving a lesson on the composition of explosive devices in a chemistry class or discussing biological warfare in biology).

The SERV professors also are sensitive to the reality that many veteran-students can have bad days that might interrupt their studies. First-year student Edmond Sweeney was grateful for this understanding when the PTSD symptoms that he has suffered since serving as an Army radio transmission operator in Kosovo cropped up in the middle of his studies at Cleveland State. "I was depressed," Sweeney said. "I didn't want to go anywhere, didn't want to do anything. There were days I didn't want to get out of bed and get dressed."

The Big Picture

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Building Bridges Between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs

Student development professionals have long argued that the success of their programs hinges heavily on collaboration with academic affairs (American College Personnel Association, 1975). More recently, a spate of national reports have called for closer collaboration between academic and student affairs to promote a more "seamless" undergraduate experience (Boyer, 1987; Carnegie Foundation, 1990) that integrates students' curricular and cocurricular experiences (ACPA & NASPA, 1997; 2004; AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998).

This article identifies five key reasons why academic and student affairs professionals should join forces to (a) promote student retention (persistence to graduation); (b) maximize student learning and cognitive development; (c) advance institutional assessment, accountability, and quality; (d) realize the goals of liberal education and holistic (whole-person) development; and (e) create a stronger sense of campus community.

Enhancing Student Retention (Persistence to Graduation)

National research indicates that the majority of students who withdraw from college are in good academic standing at the time of their departure (Gardiner, 1994; Noel, 1985; Tinto, 1993). This finding strongly suggests that the root cause of most student attrition involves issues other than just academic underpreparedness or academic-skill proficiencies, and that its solution requires the involvement of both academic and student development services. This argument is supported by a national research project designed to document effective educational practices (Project DEEP), which revealed that one key characteristic of institutions with higher-than-predicted graduation rates was a high degree of respect and collaboration between academic and student affairs (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005). Similarly, an in-depth study of state universities with higher-than-average graduation rates (given their institutional characteristics and student

population) revealed that one of the distinctive features of these high-performing institutions was campus-wide coordination of retention efforts that stimulated communication and cooperation between academic and student affairs (AASCU, 2005).

Maximizing Student Learning and Cognitive Development

Research repeatedly indicates that students' most significant and memorable learning experiences often occur outside the classroom. Data collected as part of the National Study of Student Learning reveals that first-year student gains on standardized measures of critical thinking correlated positively with student involvement in college clubs and organizations (Inman & Pascarella, 1998), and qualitative research conducted with students at different stages of their college experience indicates that reasoning skill and overall epistemological development are positively influenced by students' cocurricular experiences (Baxter Magolda, 1992). Such findings suggest that if classroom-based faculty were to collaborate with student development professionals to coordinate and integrate students' in-class and out-of-class learning experiences, synergistic effects on student learning and cognitive development are likely to result (Cuseo, 2002).

Advancing Institutional Assessment, Accountability, and Quality

Even a cursory review of college catalogues will reveal that the majority of institutional mission statements embrace educational goals that are much broader and diverse than knowledge acquisition and cognition.

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Collaboration between the professional divisions of academic and student affairs is necessary in order to ensure that assessment is comprehensive enough to capture the total impact of a college education, including both its curricular and cocurricular components.

Realizing the Goals of Liberal Education and Holistic (Whole-Person) Development

Historically, general education has been viewed almost exclusively in terms of courses that comprise the liberal arts curriculum. However, the goals of liberal education, which lie in the domain of academic affairs, and the goals of holistic development, which lie in the domain of student affairs, are strikingly similar. As Berg (1983) notes, "To educate liberally, learning experiences must be offered which facilitate the maturity of the whole person and enhance development of intellectual maturity. These are the goals of student development and clearly they are consistent with the mission and goals of liberal education" (p. 12).

Based on a meticulous review and synthesis of more than 3,000 postsecondary studies on how college affects students that were conducted over a 30-year period, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reached the following conclusion: "The evidence strongly suggests that these [college] outcomes are interdependent, that learning is holistic rather than segmented, and that multiple forces operate in multiple settings to shape student learning in ways that cross the 'cognitive-affective' divide" (p. 269).

Creating a Stronger Sense of Campus Community

In 1988, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators devoted a special edition of its professional periodical (*NASPA Journal*, vol. 20, no. 1) entirely to the issue of the "persistent gap" between student life and academic life in higher education. This historical gap still has not been bridged. In fact, it has probably widened because postsecondary institutions have grown more complex and the training of professionals who work in higher education has become more specialized. This has resulted in tighter compartmentalization of professional functions and further fragmentation of the university into independent political divisions or territories, which tend to operate as functional "silos" (Schroeder, 2005). Such compartmentalization serves to sabotage the development of a sense of campus community and splinters students' holistic development into disjointed parts.

It is noteworthy that the origins of the first-year experience movement emerged from the concerns of a former president of the University of South Carolina, Tom Jones, who thought his university needed to treat students more holistically (Watts, 1999). He was strongly influenced by Nevitt Sanford's (1968) book, *Where Colleges Fail*, in which the author argues that colleges fail when they neglect to treat students as whole persons, and they fail to do so because the institutions themselves lack organizational and functional coherence.

Specific strategies for promoting organizational coherence and cross-functional collaboration between academic and student affairs will be discussed in the next issue of *E-Source*.

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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 July issue, the deadline is May 21.

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Connecting Common Reading and Study Abroad

For the past three years, West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) has had a successful common reading program for first-year students. However, in fall 2007 the university added a twist—a study abroad experience with a common reading theme designed to further engage students and extend their cultural awareness.

Twenty first-year students—dubbed Readership WT Ambassadors—won the opportunity to go on a 10-day all-expense paid trip to Poland. The student ambassadors were chosen from among about 140 first-year students who wrote essays in which they analyzed the themes in the 2007 common reading book choice, *Night*—an autobiographical account of how author Elie Wiesel survived Nazi death camps in Poland as a teenager during World War II.

During spring break this March, the students traveled to Poland where they retraced Wiesel's footsteps and spent three days onsite at former Nazi concentration camps in Auschwitz. The students also explored Jewish museums in Kraków, Poland, and met with local Polish students to exchange cultural information. The trip was paid for through funds from a charitable foundation and a ticketed event that featured Wiesel. Six faculty members and three upperclass peer leaders accompanied the student ambassadors.

In preparation for the trip, the student ambassadors enrolled in a three-credit-hour course in which they

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studied Poland and the Holocaust. After the trip, the students returned as intellectual activists willing to link the lessons of their trip to current issues locally and globally and to be leaders of change. As part of a service-learning project, the students have created an organization that focuses on issues of genocide and that works with Sudanese, Iraqi, and Somalian refugees in Amarillo, Texas, teaching them English and résumé and job-search skills, as well as helping them complete government paperwork.

After their trip, Readership WT Ambassadors also shared their experiences with the campus and local communities, including area high schools and nonprofit organizations and created programs to raise awareness about recent acts of genocide globally, encouraging their peers to embrace our global responsibilities.

Extensive survey results collected prior to the trip indicated that WTAMU students, like their peers nationally (as demonstrated in the National Survey on Student Engagement [NSSE]), did not feel their generation was responsible to, or for, their international peers. As a result, students indicated little understanding of current global conflicts and did

Students and faculty tour the Galicja Jewish Museum in Kazimierz, a historical district of Kraków, Poland, best known for being home to a Jewish community from the 14th century until World War II. Photo courtesy of Kendra Campbell, WTAMU.

ABROAD Cont. from p. 6

not feel their lives were affected by world crises.

Using the curricular innovation of a campus-wide common reading program combined with travel related to the selected text, WTAMU helped students develop a broader global understanding. Additionally, results of a second student survey indicate that the program has transformed student engagement among all first-year students at WTAMU:

- 87% of students said the possibility of all-expense paid travel motivated them to read the book.
- 92% indicated the book was integrated into other courses.
- 71% said they discussed book themes with peers outside of class.

The Readership WT Ambassadors completed a pre- and posttest of intercultural skills. This focused on student willingness to learn about other cultures, fear about travel to a new culture, and willingness to travel abroad.

The posttravel assessments with the Poland cohort will be completed at the conclusion of the spring 2008 semester. However, preliminary results indicate that participants were initially frightened to travel to a foreign country, but after the trip to Poland, students said they would travel abroad again and that the trip has encouraged them to learn a foreign language.

The student ambassadors have maintained a blog on the Internet since they learned that they were selected to go on the trip. Days after returning from Poland, they wrote about the profound impact the trip had on their lives. One student,

Janelle Gross, describes her experience of walking through Nazi camp barracks in Auschwitz that have been converted into exhibits:

> I'm normally a fairly reserved person, and I remember struggling not to cry while we were walking through those exhibits. I had been fighting to not show on my face what I was feeling so deeply within my heart. I was feeling a complete, intense, and powerful sorrow, and it slowly filled me up and sunk its claws into my throat and my gut. … I remembered when I finally let down that barrier at Auschwitz. We walked into the room with the mountains of shoes … so many shoes … and I couldn't hold it in any longer. I gasped, and that gasp turned into a quiet sob. It was so hard to think about it, to take it all in. … It is my hope that I will always remember what we saw and learned there. I hope that through our mourning and sorrow for the horrific events of the past, we will be able to face tomorrow with a stronger resolve. A resolve for change.

Other student accounts of the trip can be viewed at **http://readership-wt.wordpress.com.**

The university plans to repeat this program next year with the 2008 common book selection, Dave Eggers' *What is the What*—a fictionalized memoir of real-life hero Valentino Achak Deng, who survived almost 15 years of civil war in Sudan and refugee-camp exile before coming to the United States in 2001. In addi-

First-year West Texas A&M student Ricky Mariscal shows respect by wearing a yarmulke as he learns about Jewish culture at the Remuh Synagogue in Kazimierz. Photo courtesy of Kendra Campbell, WTAMU.

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First-year student Allison Tindall places a stone as a memorial at a reconstructed version of the death wall in Auschwitz where thousands, including Polish political prisoners and those who aided Jewish escapees, were shot and killed by the SS, Hitler's military squad. Photo courtesy of Kendra Campbell, WTAMU.

ABROAD Cont. from p. 7

tion to reading the book, incoming first-year students will learn about the aWAKE Project (AIDS: Working toward Awareness, Knowledge and Engagement), a collection of stories and essays geared toward educating and mobilizing Americans to help fight the AIDS crisis in Africa. The collection outlines personal steps that individuals, community groups, and churches can take to have an impact on curbing the spread of AIDS.

Faculty who teach a range of courses, including English, first-year seminar, history, science, and communication, will participate in the program by integrating issues related to Africa into their courses. For the next travel abroad experience, another group of students will be selected to travel to an African country and support existing efforts to fight the spread of AIDS.

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Using Directed Self-Placement to Involve Students in Writing Course Placement

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Students enter higher education with diverse writing levels and experiences. Standardized writing skills placement tests—such as ACT, COMPASS, and Accuplacer—are commonly used to assess students' abilities and forecast success in first-year writing courses. Using these assessments, college advisors or testing specialists may give students a brief explanation of their scores, and students have few alternatives other than to select their courses based on the test results alone. Beyond that, students are not typically involved in their placement.

To better involve students in their writing course placements, a number of institutions are using directed self-placement (DSP)—a method in which students, with the advice of counselors and advisors, choose which writing course is best for them based on detailed course descriptions and the student's own perceived self-efficacy. Some institutions add an essay prompt in which they ask students to defend their choice. Faculty readers use the writing sample to help guide students in choosing the correct placement. At other institutions, students choose their writing classes through a combination of DSP and standardized writing test scores.

Regardless of the model used, the idea behind DSP is that students are more motivated toward success if they are involved in their own assessment. With DSP, students are afforded a more personal, meaningful experience and may begin to take a larger degree of ownership for their education at the onset (Royer & Gilles, 2003; Luna, 2003).

DSP in Practice

One basic model of DSP is to provide students detailed descriptions of the available writing courses and the requirements for success in these courses. Students then complete a self-inventory checklist in which they respond to statements about their reading and writing habits, their writing experiences in high school, and their scores on the SAT or ACT (see sample of DSP on p. 11). The results of the self-inventory allow students to select the writing course that seems to best reflect their abilities. Students who struggle to select a writing course can consult an educational advisor or faculty member for assistance.

Some campuses have incorporated variations to the basic model (Owens, 2005; Luna, 2003). One common variation is having students write a persuasive essay to justify their course placement decision. The writing prompt might ask students to read the course descriptions and checklists and think about which course seems to best match their current level of experience, confidence, and ability. Then students would be asked to write an essay to support their choice of writing courses and describe their strengths in writing and areas they feel need improvement.

The essay allows students to express noncognitive or affective factors involved in learning (e.g., motivation, level of confidence) and is different from commonly used placement essays in which students write on a specific topic. The English faculty who evaluate the essays can better assess students' critical thinking skills, organization, writing ability, and style.

This model could be combined with standardized placement tests. Then, advisors, counselors, and faculty who register students may use the DSP results to assist students who scored inconclusively on the standardized test—a few points above or below the cut score range. Faculty members interviewed at an Iowa community college using DSP preferred this model. One faculty member said:

> I think this writing prompt does a much better job of sorting students out than anything we've used in the past. It focuses on what we want them to talk about a little better maybe. We thought we had awfully good prompts in the past, but it seems like every time we had a prompt there was someone

who would go way off on a tangent that we didn't expect and that was very hard, I think, to rate them. Where this (prompt) gives me more critical thinking skills they have to use to base their choice on, which I think is very good. It helps me as an instructor, and the rest of the teachers I've talked to thinks it worked really well.

Conclusion

To make DSP work, strong institutional commitment from key stakeholders is required. The administration, faculty, and testing professionals must be financially supportive and genuinely committed to the initiative. The DSP process requires more time and resources than standardized testing, especially when computer-based testing is used (Royer & Gilles, 2003). DSP requires direct contact with students. In addition, resources are required to evaluate the essays and regulate the process. For select students (e.g. students who don't yet have a high school diploma or GED), state or federal regulations may impact the use of DSP.

Undoubtedly, the most significant benefit of using DSP is that it promotes self-assessment and responsibility. The process asks "students to learn from the past to make decisions about their future" (Blakesley 2003, p. 46). A secondary benefit, however, is that the writing faculty have the opportunity to communicate their expectations of students in various writing courses either directly or through correspondence. The process changes the nature of student interaction with staff and faculty (Royer & Gilles, 2003). Faculty also become more involved in the placement process.

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SAMPLE OF DIRECTED SELF-PLACEMENT

WRITING COURSE CHECKLIST

Fundamentals of Writing I is recommended if most of the following statements best describe you:

- ☐ I only read books, magazines, or newspapers when necessary.
- ☐ In high school, I didn't write much.
- ☐ My high school GPA was less than average (below 2.0).
- ☐ I don't understand the rules of grammar and punctuation.
- ☐ I avoided taking writing courses in high school.

Fundamentals of Writing II is recommended if most of the following statements best describe you:

- ☐ I read books, magazines, or newspapers fairly regularly (once a week).
- ☐ In high school, I wrote papers or essays on occasion.
- ☐ My high school GPA was average (2.0).
- ☐ I could use some review of grammar and punctuation.
- ☐ I consider myself as an average writer.

Composition I is recommended if most of the following statements best describe you:

- ☐ I consider myself to be a strong reader.
- ☐ I read regularly (several times each week).
- ☐ In high school, I wrote essays and papers on a regular basis.
- ☐ My high school GPA was above average (above a 2.5).
- ☐ I am comfortable with my ability to write grammatical sentences.
- ☐ I consider myself as a fairly strong writer.

WRITING COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Fundamentals of Writing I is the most basic writing class. You will read short essays, which are usually easy for students to understand. In class you will talk about the essays and think about the ideas that you find. You will write about your own experiences and opinions (usually 1-2 pages in length) as you think about the author's words. You will work alone and with others in groups to practice the writing process. As the course goes on, you should find it easier to write, and you should have more confidence that you are clearly saying what you want.

Fundamentals of Writing II is the second course you could take to learn to write better. You will read more essays and short pieces of literature, and they will be written for different reasons. In class you will talk about the ideas in the articles, why you think they were written, and who you think are likely to read these articles. You will think about how you might change some of your own writing depending on who might read it. You will write organized essays about your own experiences (3-4 pages) with topics such as technology and education after you have been inspired by the other readings. You will work alone and with others in groups to practice the writing process. You will try different ways to think of what to say. You will practice revising or rethinking your writing and editing your work for grammar and mechanics. You will summarize an article and begin to learn how to incorporate other writers' ideas into your own. There will be a section in the course about how to avoid plagiarism.

Fundamentals I and II count toward the hours you need to receive financial aid and figure into your grade point average. However, these classes will not count as transfer courses to another college.

Composition I requires you to read longer, more difficult essays and articles, and you will be expected to understand and analyze them. After you have some background knowledge of a new topic from your reading, you will write several papers, each usually up to five pages long. You will learn in this class how to use the ideas and information from other sources to support your own ideas. You will learn how to summarize, paraphrase, quote and cite other sources, including books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and interviews. You will learn how to use the college library and the databases there (EBSCOHOST) and how to properly cite the sources you use in MLA or APA style. You will continue working on the writing process of getting good ideas, using the best sources, organizing your thoughts, thinking about your audience, rethinking and revising your writing, and editing your work. You should feel more confident at the end of this course that you can write a research paper for any college course. This course carries transfer credit.

(Royer & Gilles, 2003). Modified with permission.

Welcome Home: Programs for Out-of-State Students Help Ease Their Transition to College

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Moving away from families, friends, and familiar routines can make transitioning into the college environment quite difficult, particularly for students who choose to attend a college out of state. In fall 2004 almost 450,000, or 16.8%, of first-year students at Title IV postsecondary schools enrolled at an institution outside of their home state, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2005).

Out-of-state, first-year students can have a greater risk of attrition, in part because the transition to a new state can present a number of challenges, including difficulty in acclimating to the local culture and making new friends. One out-of-state University of South Carolina sophomore reflects, "Everyone already came here with their cliques from high school. It's hard to get into groups with people who have been friends for years."

For out-of-state students, the transition to a new state can be made easier through university efforts to help acquaint students to a new environment and provide them with social support.

To retain out-of-state students who consider transferring to institutions closer to home, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) created the *Huskers Away From Home* program, which matches out-of-state first-year students with local alumni host "families." All out-of-state first-year students, except student-athletes, can participate. Matched through an application process that compares similar interests, students and hosts schedule get-togethers twice a semester, which allows students to connect with a family-like support system.

Host families often form very close relationships with their students, even inviting them to stay in their homes when residence halls close over holidays. UNL also holds a host parents' weekend where the alumni hosts return to their alma mater and participate in activities with their students. *Huskers Away From Home*, housed in the alumni office, helps students connect to the city and campus so they are less likely to transfer.

Out-of-state students and their parents have praised the program. The university posts comments on its web site (**http://www.huskeralum.com/student_programs/huskers_away.htm**). One student said, "No matter how far away I am from home, there is someone here to talk to, to help out or just to hang out with when I'm feeling lonely." A parent had this to say: "If only I could fully express in words how comforting it was for me to know (my son) had someone to turn to."

Many out-of-state students struggle with acclimating to the culture of their new state or region. With this reality in mind, the University of South Carolina's *Gamecocks Across America*, started in 2006, introduces out-of-state students to southern culture. Housed in the Student Success Center, the program offers a variety of activities, including a welcome week activity entitled "What's the Big Deal about Sweet Tea?" Students are treated to southern foods and learn about South Carolina and the cultural peculiarities of its residents such as dressing in sundresses, bowties, and seersucker suits for athletic events. They also learn about other services available to out-of-state students, including a one-on-one mentoring program with an upperclass student from the same state or region. Students can attend group trips to nearby cities such as Charleston, SC, Charlotte, NC, and Atlanta, GA. Additionally, out-of-state students are provided with a special guide to the university and Columbia, home to the university's main campus. For more information about this program, visit **http://www.sa.sc.edu/ssc/outofstate.htm**.

The University of Connecticut (UConn) has a similar program that provides mentoring and social activities designed to connect out-of-state students to the campus. Started in 2005, *Huskies Away From Home*, formed by the Division of Student Affairs, has become a recognized campus organization that matches out-of-state, first-year students with upperclass mentors. In addition to mentoring, students can participate in intramural soccer, basketball, and volleyball teams, and social events such as ice skating and comedy show outings, pizza party mixers, and finals week study breaks. UConn also

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Sweeney got a visit from Schupp, who slowly coaxed him back to school. Although Sweeney had missed about two weeks of classes, "the teachers in the SERV program were understanding," said Sweeney, who is studying marketing and communications. "They know that when dealing with veterans, sometimes this happens. They told me what I missed, gave me some pointers and some review. I was able to catch up."

Outside of the classroom, veteran-students at CSU receive tutoring, mentoring, and general encouragement. SERV contracts with the VA to provide mentors and seasoned veteran graduates who can offer new veteran-students general support. The university has created an on-campus service station staffed by professional representatives of veteran service organizations, including the AMVETS National Service Foundation and the Department of Veterans Affair's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment service who are on campus at least once a week to answer questions and lend support.

Veteran students often reach a quagmire wading through VA bureaucracy to get their educational benefits started (the benefits are disbursed monthly directly to students and, in turn, students pay the university). Sometimes, the VA can take as long as 14 weeks to process and start the payments. Then students face another bureaucratic dilemma when the university is unwilling to wait. Students who don't pay on time are, ultimately, withdrawn from the university. CSU has removed this barrier by extending their wait time. Schupp also often mediates financial differences between the VA and the university. Schupp explains that frequently, veteran-students need someone to handle almost every aspect of their university affairs—from admission, to registration, to working with the bursar's office—because in the military they became accustomed to having their commanding officers navigate the bureaucracy for them, Schupp said.

Whether SERV will result in higher retention of veteran-students is yet to be determined. However, in the first year, Schupp's efforts to recruit veteran-students under the SERV program have already paid off—enrollment of veteran-students using the GI Bill at Cleveland State has increased by about 30% from 197 veterans to 259. Schupp's unique recruitment technique went beyond the usual military day fair on campus to county fairs across Ohio where thousands of families still gather annually. Schupp handed out video cameras and tapes so that families with soldiers overseas could send family videos of the fair to their troops. The tapes were preloaded with a two-minute advertisement of Cleveland State's SERV program.

"I hit my target audience," Schupp said. "They have a CSU advertisement taped on memories that they are never going to throw out. It's better than a pamphlet that gets thrown away."

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provides out-of-state students with contact lists of students from various states and regional areas. The university uses a Facebook networking community and e-mail lists to disseminate information about upcoming events geared toward out-of-state students. For more information on this program, go to **www.dsa.uconn. edu/huskiesawayfromhome.**

These programs support out-of-state students by helping them address the issues of being physically separated from family and friends, find a niche within their universities, and deal with the possible culture shock of moving to a new area or region. Such programs welcome out-of-state students to campus and help them find a comfortable place within the university, thus helping these students better transition to their new setting.

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What's Happening at the National Resource Center

Conferences

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/**

New Publications

Monograph No. 48. Learning Initiatives in the Residential Setting
Gene Luna and Jimmie Gahagan, Editors. (2008).
ISBN 978-1-889-27159-0. $35.00

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. This monograph is a valuable resource for faculty, academic affairs administrators, and housing professionals who seek to maximize the learning potential of campus residence halls.

To order or for more information, please visit our web site **http://sc.edu/fye/publications/index.html**

Research

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**

The National Resource Center launched a national survey of student success and learning centers in April. Results of the survey will provide new and comprehensive information about the nature, organization, practices, and evaluation of student success and learning centers at U.S. colleges and universities. A summary of results will be published to the NRC web site in summer 2008.