

22nd International Conference on The First-Year Experience
July 20-23, 2009
Montréal, Quebec, Canada

Multi-layer Safety Net: Developing a Comprehensive Network of Help to Ensure Student Success and Retention

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Universities struggle to develop resources for students who need help but have a hard time connecting to available resources. We have developed a multi-layer safety net to support students who were not previously served by our established network. This impacts not only the students, but also the security of the campus and retention. We have used our training as counselors to emphasize helping students and have been happy, although not surprised, that as we better help students, we retain them better as well.

We will discuss how we have identified at-risk students early and connected them with resources quickly. We are lead by the principle that, “students cannot articulate their needs, they are unable to seek help to address these needs, unless the institution intervenes” (Levitz & Noel, 1999, p. 127). We have developed and utilized a computer-base referral system, Save Our Students (SOS), to help our campus community (faculty, parents, etc.) identify students, refer them, and get then connected to a counselor. The system is tied into our university’s information management system, which allows us to spend more time helping students and less time on administration.

When we identified under served, at risk students, we developed programs to serve as a safety net. We will discuss three of these already implemented “safety net” programs (Midterm, Probation, and Discovery), and will talk about the development of the fourth (Emotional Intelligence). We will present data to show our programs’ growth, effectiveness, and impact on campus retention.

This presentation will be interactive in nature and will focus on the development, operations, effectiveness and corresponding challenges of these programs. We can offer insight and information so others can develop and refine their own programs and help us to take our system of help to the next level of efficiency.

Pathways to Student Success: Promoting a Successful Transition to Higher Education Through Mutual Support and Guidance

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The role played by formal Peer Support and Learning (PSL) Programmes in supporting learners in Higher Education is reflected in the literature (see Woodd, 1997) with a particular emphasis on the contribution made by such programmes in enhancing first year student success by promoting a smooth transition into Higher Education (Topping, 1996). However, the precise nature of PSL provision across the UK Higher Education Sector remains largely un-researched, and little is known about the extent to which UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) utilize PSL as a pedagogic tool. In drawing upon the emergent findings of a critical content analysis of PSL provision in the UK, undertaken as part of a large international study, this paper begins to provide distinctive insight into these issues; focusing specifically on the scope, and pedagogical and social value of PSL in supporting first year students' transition to higher education.

One of the key issues identified thus far relates to the complexities of conceptualizing PSL within an academic setting. Indeed, issues of definition remain contentious with a variety of terminologies used across the sector including Supplemental Instruction, Peer Mentoring, Peer Assisted Learning and Peer Tutoring. By synthesizing the different conceptualizations identified in the content analysis, and by taking into account previous literature, the paper proposes a Typology of Peer Support and Learning. In developing this Typology, the researchers encapsulate the conceptual, theoretical, practical and methodological challenges associated with PSL. In doing they make a distinctive contribution to current academic and practitioner debates in the areas of student support and the first year experience.

Topping K.J. (1996). 'The Effectiveness of Peer Tutoring in Further and Higher Education: A Typology and Review of the Literature'. Higher Education. 32. 321-345

Woodd, M. (1997) 'Mentoring in further and higher education: learning from the literature'. Education and Training 39(9):333-343

The New Look of First-Year Academic Advising: A Perspective from the Provost's Office

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In 2003, Aurora University invested significant resources into the development of a first-year advising program. Small groups of first-year students were matched with faculty members and peer mentors to provide academic advising and support students' adjustment to college. The program had all the makings of a quality program: faculty involvement, upper-level student mentoring, administrative support from the provost's office, adequate funding, supportive training, academic and social components, and first-year seminar coursework. Yet, the retention rate remained stagnant over the next four years. Furthermore, student assessments indicated that retained students were dissatisfied with the quality of their academic advising after their first year. Students felt shuffled from advisor to advisor and indicated the need for the same person to advise them throughout their college years. Given these assessment findings, the Crouse Center for Student Success was created.

Named after a married couple who worked at the university thirty years ago, the Crouse Center has become all things relating to ADVISING. The professional staff of nine, whose backgrounds include higher education, athletics, government, and management, advise students on a number of issues including course selection and career exploration. Each staff person academically advises students in assigned majors. Yet, each advisor has additional responsibilities relating to academic support. Examples include administering programs for conditionally-admitted first-year students, the coordination of career counseling, and training students for orientation programs.

This session, presented by the University Provost and Assistant to the Provost, will highlight how assessment can lead to change, namely in rethinking how higher education provides academic advisement. The first-year program, from how it is sold to students in the recruitment phase to how it is implemented, impacts student satisfaction past the first year. This session will offer attendees ways to think about their own assessment data and how to approach academic advising.

A Comparison of Learning Skills Delivery Models: Individual Appointments, Non-Credit Workshop and Transitional Success Course

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This session will report on the outcomes for three groups of first-year students receiving learning skills assistance (through the same instructor) by individual appointments, non-credit

group workshops or an elective learning framework course. This investigation has tracked over 200 first-year students over the last four years, at a small, predominately undergraduate institution. The students at Brandon University tend to be either very successful or quite unprepared for university studies. Some of our programs have tight competitions for entrance, while the general arts or science degrees have an open admissions policy. Many of our students are non-traditional learners, with more students married than in residence. Indeed one of the objectives of the institution is to enhance programs for our rural, northern or Aboriginal students. This session will compare the entering high school grades, GPAs, and completion/attendance, retention and graduation rates for traditional and non-traditional students.

Students receiving academic support in an individual setting, in workshops or in a Fundamentals of Inquiry course are assessed relative to a control group of introductory psychology students not using these services. These types of transitional programs aim to increase student success through multiple means - skill set practice, knowledge acquisition, application to other settings, implementation of personal control and responsibility strategies, and engagement. Yet there is relatively little assessment of the differences in the impact of these services, particularly when trying to address integrated or interdisciplinary learning (Dembo & Seli, 2004; Keeling et al, 2008). One of the aims of this presentation is to provide measures for designing learning skills services in the context of a diverse student population. The data support the argument that effective academic support services need to attend to individual as well as situational characteristics.

How Learning Styles, Attitudes, Experiences, and Demographics Affect Academic Achievement in First-Year Chemistry Courses

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My presentation will begin with an overview of the present situation in Brock University's Faculty of Mathematics and Science. This Faculty has the highest rate of students put on academic probation at the university. Although many of the students do well with the majority of their courses, the one which gives many students the most difficulty is First Year Chemistry. A remarkable 90+% of the usage of the Student Development Centre's Drop-In Math and Science help is to assist students with their first-year Chemistry labs, assignments and preparation for exams. Less than 10% is directed towards assisting students with Math, Biology, and Physics combined. This data was my motivation for studying the factors which affect academic success in students taking first-year Chemistry courses.

I will discuss my methods to determine each student's Learning Style using a modified Kolb Learning Style Inventory and the characteristics of each of the four categories. I will then show the plot of Learning Styles versus grades. Next, I will explain the Chemical Attitudes and Experiences Questionnaire and correlations to student achievement at the beginning of the academic year, the end of the academic year, the differences over the course of the year, and how these factors correlate to academic success. Lastly, I will discuss various demographic factors which were determined to be correlated to success in first-year chemistry, and the degree to which these factors affect grades. I will conclude by going over those characteristics which were found to be most common in highly successful students and make recommendations for ways to increase student retention and success in this integral first-year course.

Cross-Disciplinary Experiential Learning: Practical Examples from a Commuter Campus

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Public urban commuter campuses are challenged with how to implement meaningful integrated learning communities within budget restrictions, competing demands on student time, and a fixed set of general education requirements. There is a twofold challenge with linking pre-existing introductory courses from radically different disciplines in a learning community: 1) the identification, articulation, and consistent utilization of learning objectives to unite courses and 2) the design of meaningful objective-based assignments with content overlap. Without common learning objectives there is no means of communicating to the students the functionality of any particular unit or task. Yet, students, particularly first-year students, do not begin to build interdisciplinary connections based on abstract concepts spoon-fed in a hierarchical fashion. Thus regular meaningful content connections involving active, experiential learning are required to naturalize learning objectives into the curriculum.

We advocate beginning from the fundamental common academic principle that any argument must derive from supporting evidence. Our curriculum is built upon helping students to observe, critique, create, and express valid arguments. This is the analytical framework that gives meaning to the identification of supporting evidence. The facts are the building blocks; the idea is the cement that holds them in a meaningful shape.

This session offers educators and administrators, a blue print for designing assignments which use the campus, the city streets, and public institutions, as means of re-enforcing and cumulatively building upon classroom experiences. Students immediately apply the new information they have acquired to real-life experience and thus are challenged to put all the information together into holistic explanations of their observations. They simultaneously draw upon both disciplines while working in teams to accomplish a common goal. The discussion will end by examining actual journal reflections by students after each exercise and emphasizing how such qualitative assessment can inform future implementation and design.

Critical Inquiry: A Comprehensive Strategy for Student Success

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The SEEK (the Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) Department at Brooklyn College is the New York State legislatively-mandated program for educationally and economically disadvantaged students. From 1995, the program has been awarded three FIPSE grants from the U.S. Department of Education. These grants provided an on-going model of curriculum and faculty development so as to design a curriculum that included basic skills, multicultural perspectives, and core curriculum materials in order that students be prepared to enter and succeed in a rigorous general education, specifically core curriculum, at the college level.

Since the initiation of the project, the SEEK Department has engaged in ongoing faculty development. The products include a SEEK Pre-Freshman Summer Program curriculum, an academic year learning community program, an eportfolio project entitled “Benchmarks for Success,” as well as other technology initiatives. Nine transportable elements or essential curriculum features were identified. A theme-centered sourcebook was developed for the summer program.

Through the second and third FIPSE grants, the process and model of curriculum and faculty development, called the Brooklyn College SEEK Model, was disseminated to 13 colleges over a three-year period, and shared with over 40 colleges and universities. What is important is that the participating colleges have not adopted the curriculum, but have adapted the model of the process and the nine transportable elements to their campus needs.

The Brooklyn College SEEK Model has been enormously effective due to the constant updating of the curriculum through on-going faculty development. Each year at least 98% of all entering SEEK students pass the basic skills reading, writing, and mathematics assessment tests within one year. The passing rate on the CUNY Proficiency Examination (the rising junior exam) is 100% within the allowed three tries. Fewer than 5% of the students have less than a 2.0 GPA in any given semester.

Organized for Impact: How a University College Enhances a First-Year Experience

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The presenters will open by inviting participants into a discussion of the administrative challenges faced by the first year experience programming at their institutions. Next the presenters will explain the philosophy behind a university college. The focus for the conversation will be the university college structure and what it offers institutions in overcoming programming challenges.

In addition, each presenter will provide the organizational structure of the university college at his/her institution, emphasizing the breadth of services offered to first-year students, the nature and format of the first-year experience, and the reason for inclusion of the first year experience in the array of university college programs and services. Each presenter will review ways in which the university college facilitates the first year experience and present data on how the university college has improved the experience for first year students at his/her university.

The presentation will conclude by resuming the previous conversation about the challenges faced by the presenters and by the session participants. At the end of the session, the presenters will offer some strategies to create a new university college or strengthen an existing university college.

Student Development Theory in Film

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Presenter will review each of the seven vectors that constitute Arthur Chickering's Theory of Identity Development. After each one is described, a brief movie clip will be shown that highlights some aspect of that vector. For example, the fourth vector involves developing mature interpersonal relationships and an appreciation of differences. A clip from Remember the Titans shows two characters, one black and one white, on a high school football team forced to integrate under a federal mandate. The two students at first don't get along, but we eventually see an increased tolerance for and acceptance of differences, and an increased capacity for a mature relationship.

Following each movie clip will be a discussion on ways we can promote the development of each vector and how we can apply the theory to enhance our first-year students' personal and academic success.

The vectors and movie titles are as follows: Developing Competence in Dead Poet's Society; Managing Emotions in Sleepless in Seattle; Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence in St. Elmo's Fire; Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships in Remember the Titans; Establishing Identity in Torch Song Trilogy; Developing Purpose in Say

Anything; Developing Integrity in Jerry Maguire.

Chickering saw the establishment of identity as the core developmental issue with which students tackle during the college years. Faculty and staff can play a major role in helping first-year students resolve issues, contribute to their growing sense of identity, and more systematically enhance student development.

NOTE: I presented a similar session at last year's Dublin, Ireland conference. It was very well attended, and I think there would be continued interest in this topic to warrant presenting it again. I've made some changes based on feedback from that conference, including allowing more time following each movie clip for discussion, and more directly connecting the concepts to how faculty and staff can enhance student success. Some of the movies have changed, to be more current and appropriate, and finally, I am proposing a co-presenter. Thank you for your consideration.

Considering the First-Year Experience for Native American/Indigenous College Students

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The extent to which cultural differences affect the success of American Indian students in higher education is relatively unknown. A limited number of studies have investigated the college attrition and retention rates of American Indians. Most of this research has been directed towards the individual characteristics that influence student success, such as pre-college preparation and study skills. However, the individual characteristics traditionally used in student outcomes research may be misleading when determining what influences success for American Indian college students (Lin, LaCounte, & Eder, 1988). Brown and Kurpius (1997) suggested differences between the institutional requirements of higher education and family and cultural backgrounds of American Indian students as the primary source of conflict. For example, White middle-class values, such as individual competitiveness, are prevalent in higher education at most predominantly White universities (Katz, 1989). As a result, conflict is created for the American Indian student whose cultural group values cooperation (Tierney, 1992).

Additional research has focused on the relationship of non-traditional measures in assessing outcomes for underrepresented students. Non-cognitive variables have been identified as more reliable predictors of persistence to graduation in students of color (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1987). These variables include a variety of constructs. Research has shown that American Indian students have unique experiences on college campuses and that those experiences sometimes influence their academic and psychological development and adjustment. It is essential to

discover whether or not the race related experiences and acculturation level of American Indian students are affecting their academic motivation and how well they fit on their college campus. In addition, understanding the resilience of American Indian students, who by the time they arrive on college campuses have already, experienced many life challenges, and its impact on their academic motivation and environmental experiences is essential. This information will assist college student affairs professionals who are directly involved in working with American Indian students in providing culturally relevant programs and services. If race related stress and acculturation level are having an impact on academic motivation and college adjustment of American Indian students then additional programming may need to be developed to better meet their needs. It may also provide insight into training and professional development that may need to be created to assist other campus professionals to more effectively assist American Indian college students.

This presentation will review the results of an international study that was conducted to explore these constructs. The study included 21 colleges and universities located in the United States and Canada and with 331 student participants. A discussion of how the findings of this study may assist practitioners to better meet the needs of American Indian students will follow the presentation of the study findings.

Can They Learn? Creating and Developing First-Year Student Scholars

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At Buffalo State College, our learning community is fostering the development of a diverse group of first-year students into the "life of the mind" at a level unparalleled by their peers. What makes this possible is the combination of community, valorization of the individual, rigorous academic standards across a variety of pedagogies, and the participation of the students/faculty with internationally recognized visiting scholars/artists/writers in seminars and workshops. A learning community at our school is the basic required writing course, 4 required interdisciplinary courses woven around a unifying theme, and a one hour seminar in which all the professors, the staff liaison, and students participate. In the first semester, our students read texts by Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Cormic McCarthy, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, James Joyce, Richard Wright, Upton Sinclair, and Franz Kafka. The background to the development of student scholars has been the erosion of liberal arts values on college campuses. There are structural conditions which are endemic but there are also specific contingencies and conditions on individual campuses. This workshop will discuss practices and provide strategies for developing student scholars in the first year. Key points are:

1. Participants will gain an understanding about the effectiveness of Learning Communities in supporting developing first year students as scholars.
2. Participants will engage in dialogue regarding their own campus and current efforts to develop the "life of the mind" of their first-year students.
3. The work of several first year students will be presented. Participants will hear from

students about their development as scholars and the opportunities and challenges they encountered throughout their first year during a short narrative DVD.

4. Participants will review strategies for creating and developing student scholars based upon best practices, and will consider the usability of the model for their campus

E-portfolio in First-Year Course

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Bunkyo Gakuin started its own e-portfolio in 2008 and upgrade it into electronic version in April 2009. Under the strong teamwork of the 17 teachers who are responsible for the 17 small classes at the first year, face-to-face communication between the students and the teachers are made.

Bunkyo e-portfolio provides indispensable information for further discussion between the students and the teachers and helps students to set their prioritized targets in the first year. The contents of the e-portfolio were developed by a small number of teachers at the University with close consultation with all 17 teachers.

E-portfolio was possible with the technology of SAAS and is considered to be among the first university to implement such e-portfolio in Japan.

Bunkyo currently expands the e-portfolio into the career education at the third-year with the participation of its career center, members of the career committee and the teacher responsible for the career education. The students are expected to report their own assessment of the skills and experiences of the career activities. Teachers and staffs at the career center could closely monitor the activities of the students and could provide advices and suggestion in real time basis under "e-career portfolio".

With the through education on e-portfolio starting the first-year and resuming at the third-year on career activities, the presentation could provide simulative example on how the medium-to-small sized universities in Japan could help the students to achieve higher level of skills and capacities before the commencement. Against the unfavorable condition of the economy and the decreasing number of the applicants at the universities in Japan, the presentation should also provide suggestions to the universities outside the Japan as well.

Virtually Onboarding First-Year Students to Campus

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During the session, the purpose of this study will be addressed which was to develop, implement and evaluate a pre-orientation Summer Virtual Acclimation and Academic Advising (SVA3) initiative for first-year college students implemented in the summer prior to their arrival on campus. The presenter will address that through the SVA3, students interacted,

socialized, and communicated virtually with staff members and peers, received academic advising, were acclimated to campus support services and offices, and were educated on the expectations necessary to achieve academic success in college. The virtual and Web 2.0 technologies that were utilized during the new initiative will be highlighted and described.

The student and professional staff member results will be discussed with the attendees that demonstrated that the SVA3 was successful in assisting first-year students in the areas of communication, social integration and interaction, academic preparation and success, college adjustment, and acclimation to student services and campus staff for both first-generation and non-first generation students. In addition, staff members who were trained on how to implement and facilitate the SVA3 positively evaluated the new virtual initiative with respect to familiarity, proficiency, and usage of virtual and Web 2.0 technologies, and optimistically agreed that the SVA3 had the ability to establish effective communication and successfully acclimate and advise the incoming class of 2012 prior to their arrival on campus.

Lastly, the session will triangulate the student assessed outcome findings with pertinent student development theories and literature in an effort to offer additional support for this untraditional virtual method of orienting, acclimating, and advising new first-year students.

The Effectiveness of Campus-Wide Peer-Assisted Learning Using Supplemental Instruction Model (PALSI) Scheme

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Supplemental Instruction, known as Peer Assisted Learning (using Supplemental Instruction model) Scheme (PALSI) at the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) is a collaborative and cooperative learning model aiming at helping students cope with their studies better without labeling them as weak students and uplifting students' learning motivation and academic performance. The PALSI scheme was first introduced in the College of Business of CityU in 2002 and was institutionalized in 2007-2008 academic year. Clear intended learning outcomes were set for both PALSI leaders and PALSI students. The scheme normally runs for nine weeks with two one-hour PALSI sessions per week. To evaluate the effectiveness of the PALSI scheme, student performance was analyzed and a comparison was done between PALSI and non-PALSI students of individual PALSI courses. The average course grade point for students who had joined the PALSI scheme was, in general, significantly higher than their counterparts who took the same course but had not joined the scheme. The results were consistent for courses that joined the PALSI scheme for seven academic years. Students who joined the PALSI scheme were found to have better self-regulation techniques in learning and have a better attitude towards university study than their counterparts who had not joined the PALSI scheme. Based on the results of questionnaires, both PALSI students and PALSI leaders found the scheme very useful and helped them in mastering the course content. The successfulness of the PALSI scheme will be shared in this presentation and the limitations and/or difficulties of the scheme will also be discussed in this session.

Assessing a Biology-Math-English First-Year Learning Community: Statistical Comparisons Between Learning Community and Regular First-Year Students

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How does one assess whether a freshman learning community makes a marked difference in student performance and retention? Two years of assessment data from a nonresidential, three-way, freshman learning community (LC) at the College of Charleston that included introduction to cellular and molecular biology (BIOL 111), English composition (ENGL 101), and pre-calculus (MATH 111) were statistically analyzed. The LC emphasized the inherent connections between these courses and included an interdisciplinary pH laboratory in which students collected and analyzed data and wrote up the exercise by addressing mathematical and biological implications as well as considering various target audiences. LC freshmen participated in mandatory activities aimed at developing academic success skills, utilizing campus resources and discovering the campus/city and were expected to attend weekly 1 hour supplemental instruction (SI) in both math and biology. SI and separate study skills seminars were encouraged but optional for non-LC students. The English 101 courses in this community were composed exclusively of entering freshman LC students while entering freshman LC students formed a cohort within biology and math classes which also contained an approximately equal number of entering freshmen regular, non-LC students. Because LC and non-LC students received identical classroom instruction in math and biology, statistical comparisons were possible between groups. Student performance and retention data were analyzed between LC and non-LC students, between LC and non-LC students that regularly attended SI versus those that did not, and between LC and non-LC instate versus out of state students. Statistics indicate LC students out-performed non-LC students. There was also a correlation between increased student performance and SI attendance.

Accreditation and the First-Year Experience

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This session will examine the trend for institutions to develop first-year experience plans to satisfy regional accreditation agencies. Particularly in the SACS region but also in other areas, accreditation processes have required institutions to develop plans that enhance quality and lead to demonstrable student learning outcomes. Several schools have chosen to create or enhance their first-year experience programs to satisfy these types of requirements. This session will examine the various approaches many institutions have taken to developing first-year experiences through the accreditation process, will look in-depth at this process at the College of Charleston, and will evaluate the accreditation process as a motivating factor in first-year reform.

Institutions of different types express different reasons for developing a first-year experience for accreditation or reaccreditation. Some clearly acknowledge the need to increase retention as justification for centering their accreditation proposal on the FYE. Others tend to cite the need for more intentionality in programs and processes to justify their FYE proposal. Still others are influenced by the success of FYE programs at other institutions in designing their programs.

The College of Charleston, like some other institutions involved in the reaccreditation process, used this opportunity to make significant changes to its freshman seminar, moving from a continuing orientation model to an academic seminar model. The College also developed an extensive learning communities program and has committed to having all first-year students involved in one or the other of these initiatives by 2012. While many particular aspects of the FYE program at College of Charleston may be unique

Experiences of First-Generation College Students

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Success in college is relative to student's life experiences, progress and access to right opportunities to learn. First generation college students because of lack of role models and adequate family support find it challenging to access collaborative communities of practice in education. Hence, positive school experiences are rare.

This study provides an example of how first generation college students were able to learn and develop a new sense of self and empowerment in their identities as college students. Their college experiences through the work study programs, and G force jobs provided appropriate activities, situations, interactions, and support that contributed to their potential for success. Educators must realize that before academic achievement can be reached, students must sense that they are capable, and that success is possible in their newly forming student identity. Having adequate financial support for college education was one of the most important factors of better GPA and positive college experience among all students. In spite of financial concerns, most of the students decided to stay on campus because they all wanted to experience the academic environment fully and engage in the social life of school. All of them wanted to

be part of the progressive college going student body. Living on campus also had a strong positive influence on their academic performance and persistence to complete their college degree.

Program for Leadership and University Success – A Real “PLUS”

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The Program for Leadership and University Success (PLUS) at Concordia provides approximately 1,000 new students participating in mentor groups with ongoing, personal support using a small team of approximately 15 mentors. Additionally, through outreach, workshops, and a drop-in centre, mentors support new and returning students not specifically in mentor groups, expanding the benefits and positive impact on student success.

This session provides an overview of PLUS objectives and structure. The mentor job description, hiring procedures, pre-service and in-service training, as well as mentor evaluation are explained; samples of materials used are included. The role of the mentors and activities they engage in to support their mentees and the student body in general are described. Comments from mentors and mentees are provided.

Mentors initiate contact with mentees at orientation events where they assume an active role through skits, poster presentations, and interactive tours. During the year, mentors staff a drop-in centre and maintain contact with mentees through email, phone or in-person appointments. They conduct outreach and seminars. Through these, described in detail, mentors help students learn about university resources and policies, provide referrals to services, share strategies for academic and personal success, and help students become actively involved in university life.

While one objective of PLUS is to provide students with positive role models and support, another is to develop leadership in all students, with specific emphasis on the mentors. Mentors receive training on topics including communication, personal boundaries, confidentiality, diversity, professional behavior, and team work. Mentors gain personal experience with services, including instruments such as the MBTI and Strong, contributing to their own development while allowing them to refer other students knowledgeably. How PLUS objectives are integrated to create a win-win for mentors and mentees is explained; other institutions may benefit by adopting one or more elements of PLUS.

Campus After Dark: First-Year Experiences of ‘Raunch Culture’

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In this session I will be exploring the emergence of a trend dubbed “Raunch Culture” and its particular emphasis within the first-year experience. I will begin the program with an introduction to the development of this trend (What is Raunch?) with a slideshow of images and examples from several university campuses. Two examples include images of students

participating in a recent hockey game between rival residence houses, where the students were clothed in t-shirts that were extremely offensive, sexist, heterosexist and misogynistic in order to support their own team and bash the others. I will also draw attention to the development of social events that involve women playing hyper-sexualized and subservient roles, such as the ‘Pimp ‘n Hoe’ parties that have gained popularity on campuses. At this point I will ask the group for examples from their own institutions in order to compare the presence of this issue at different organizations. Since the argument that is often presented by the participants of these activities is that it’s simply ‘harmless fun’, I will then split the participants into groups that will explore the benefits and the harms of such events and behaviors and engage in a facilitated discussion. I will cover a few more topics with the group: the role of men and women, why the first-year is the most important year, the impact on students (with a particular focus on LGBTQ students), the media influence and the language of ‘raunch’. Lastly I will demonstrate some of the approaches that have been utilized to address this issue, such as collaborating with campus partners in the human rights, equity and academic departments to begin awareness events. We will end with a discussion period for the participants to ask questions and offer their suggestions for bringing this subject to light on their campuses.

Not Your Grandma's Advising Model: A Collaborative Approach to Exploratory First-Year Advising

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In this session, presenters will discuss how DePaul University’s Office for Academic Advising Support successfully implemented unique holistic advising practices and programming to meet the needs of first-year undeclared and exploratory students. Session attendees will learn how the unique advising model (and the faculty and staff collaborations that arose as a result), coupled with the multi-team structure of the office, helped decrease the number of undeclared first-year students by a third mid-way through these students’ first year.

Presenters will review our cross-college advisor training and creation of particular, program-specific, faculty-staff relationships that were paramount in creating a one-stop shop for

undeclared and exploratory students. Additionally, presenters will discuss the successes and challenges faced with creating a new advising unit designed to address exploratory students' advising needs. We will also discuss specifics related to the creation and implementation of the office, faculty advisor support, acquiring a space to accommodate our rapid expansion, necessary marketing efforts, and establishing a unique identity within the existing campus advising structure.

Finally, presenters will engage the audience in an interactive project that will provide attendees with a strategic plan to assist in conceptualizing similar holistic advising services for their institutions.

First-Year Experience Movement in Japan: How It Developed and the Issues It Focused On

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Universities and colleges in Japan have experienced sweeping and drastic changes during these ten years. Many factors are related to the change: universalization of HE, obligatory accreditation system, and so on. For example, “quality assurance” has rushed us into the reform of curriculum, program, and pedagogy. Many universities and colleges are now obliged to put stress on learning and teaching rather than research.

While some teachers have tried to give better classes as a part of liberal arts to first-year students, systematized or organized FYE classes were not programmed until late 1990's. As universities and colleges have noticed that most of students have some problems in getting the way of learning, their eyes have been gradually focused on “the first year.” But it was mainly based on an academic concern; in Japan, FYE programs started as a part of regular courses and now do so. This movement is also advanced by “Good Practice” grant system which was planned and managed by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. So, the movement was promoted, in a sense, on the competitive and survival game, but at the same time, it was a necessary conclusion; because many universities and colleges had troubled by under-achieved and/or lower-motivated students.

According to the comparative data between Japan and US, Japanese students evaluate their study skills and generic skills, which they get at universities and colleges, lower than high school. Many of Japanese students may be conscious of specific knowledge on their major. On the other hand, the way to learn may not be tangible for them. It also suggests that there could

not be a bridge between what and how they learn at high school and that at universities and colleges.

“Japanese Association of First-Year Experience at Universities and Colleges” recently established has a mission to explore both research method and practical method.

A Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Tool Derived From an International Literature Review

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The tool is for self-evaluation and review and action planning of themes derived from a Higher Education Academy literature review The First Year Experience (Harvey et al 2006) in higher education.

The tool acts as a vehicle for:

- Introduction to relevant literature
- Reflection on current practice
- Agenda setting for professional development
- Deriving research themes that are local, institutional and sector related
- Strategic planning

It can be used to prioritize issues of importance and ways forward can be explored with cross referencing to the full text of the literature review. The tool may be used as a whole set of themes or addressed as single themes matched to the interests and contexts of users.

There are five main lenses in the tool based on the literature review:

1. Performance and retention, including predicting success, assessing performance and withdrawal retention
2. Factors impacting on performance and persistence, including institutional, personal and external factors
3. Support for the first-year, including induction, adjustment and skill support
4. Learning and teaching, including new techniques for first-year groups and first-year learning behavior.
5. Implications for policy, practice, research, and supplementary issues.

The dialogic processes underpinning the use of the tool may indeed establish new research into local phenomena and may also lead to further research in under-developed areas of the review. It has been used across the 3 faculties in the university so as to influence developments of the first year experience and iteration of the design lenses of a new undergraduate framework. It has been presented for critique and adoption at regional events of the Higher Education Academy (UK).

The presentation will outline the purpose, audience and form of the tool and illustrate its uses to date. It will be offered to attendees for further use in their unique situations.

A Thorny Issue: Encouraging Students to Engage in Large Classes

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The paper begins with a discussion on the challenges large groups of students present to learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) strategies of first year modules. There is then a presentation, which will show how the speaker has created meaningful learning experiences in a first semester module for 250 students. The particular challenges to the LTA strategies of the module include adult learners with a broad range of age difference, life experience and ability.

The presentation comprises of details of how module teaching and learning is tailored to induction or transition with the emphasis on the learning process to; encourage student confidence in a university setting, enable students to anticipate and interact with module content and take responsibility for their own learning.

It will also give details of the assessment strategy and show how formative and summative assessment feedback is individualized for students. The assessment strategy is designed to promote early engagement with assignment, interaction with lecturers and encourages information retrieval and technology skills.

The presentation will conclude with details of the student evaluation, module results and lecturer appraisal that have been used to audit and demonstrate the success of this module. The concurrent session will be brought to a close with the delegates having the opportunity to; discuss the challenges for academic staff when integrating large groups of first year students into a university setting, consider learning, teaching and assessment strategies suitable for large first year modules and share ideas that encourage early student integration and success.

Assessing Adventure Programs as a Retention Tool

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Retention of students is a crucial issue for institutions of higher education and extended orientation programs may enhance the rate from first to second year. The Summer Fireside Experience [SFEP] (Gass, 1987) consisted of an adventure based program that supplemented the summer orientation program. The other groups investigated consisted of an extended traditional summer orientation program [Freshman Camp] and a control group of students in the minimum two day program. Gass determined there to be a significant difference among the groups at the end of the freshman year ($F[2, 157] = 3.38, p < 0.05$).

The purpose of this study was to investigate if an adventure based pre-freshmen orientation would enhance the retention from first to second year of undergraduate students. The program consists of a weeklong adventure based experience (camping, hiking, rock climbing and

rappelling, and a 2-day white water rafting trip).

Data was run via SAS as a Two-Way T-test. Two groups of students were compared: those that took part in the adventure based program to all others at the university. After data output was recorded, the information was analyzed and assessed to view the comparisons in retention.

The retention for the adventure groups range from 86.4-96.7% per year over the 4 years studied. The control group ranged from 88.7-90.1%. Although there is evidence of a relationship between the adventure program and the retention of students, when testing the data a p-value of .1107 appears, which is not statistically significant. However, in comparing the standard deviation, the scores for the adventure program participants is tighter knit to the mean value, which in this case based on the overall mean shows that it is more probable for adventure students to be retained than non-adventure students. Further and varied investigation is needed.

Emotional Intelligence in a First-Semester Success Course

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“Achieving Excellence in Student Learning” is the first strategic goal of Fleming College’s Strategic Plan. In order to meet the strategic goal, we wanted to replicate previous research that found a link between emotional and social competencies and academic success and retention.

We aimed to improve academic success and completion rates at Fleming College by improving student’s levels of emotional intelligence. The goal of the project was to modify a first semester student success course to include curriculum related to improving emotional and social competencies. Given our knowledge that many students withdraw from the college before the end of first semester, we believed it was important to target interventions/strategies of first semester students. An additional goal of the study was to empirically test whether students who completed the modified course would be higher in emotional intelligence than students who did not take the course. We hypothesized that students who completed a first semester course rich in content related to emotional intelligence would have higher levels of emotional intelligence than a matched group of students who did not take the course. The results indicated that students who took the course were significantly higher in self awareness, a key emotional intelligence dimension.

This session will highlight the research findings of several projects at Fleming College on emotional intelligence and academic success and retention. Information will also be provided about the development and implementation of a first semester student success course designed specifically to improve emotional intelligence and academic success. Specific examples of curriculum will be shared and discussed.

Giving Students an Opportunity to Succeed: Developing and Coordinating a Successful Summer Program for First-Year Students

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Retention of first-year students is a critical, and therefore, primary objective for most institutions of higher learning. One way to improve retention rates is to create a summer program that occurs prior to students' first year of college. During the summer program, students experience academic life at the collegiate level and take credit bearing courses in preparation for the fall semester. The Summer B Program at Florida International University serves conditionally admitted students whose high school grade point average and/or entrance exam scores do not meet the University's minimum criteria for fall admission. This six-week program includes a First-Year Seminar along with coursework in Math, English, Social Sciences, and/or Arts that fulfill general education requirements. The opportunity to attend a summer program prior to the first year of college has shown many positive effects for students, including higher retention and graduation rates (Walpole et al., 2008). Consequently, it is essential that resources are allocated and mechanisms are put in place to assure that students are guided into courses that lead them towards a successful first year. Our main objective is to address such resources and mechanisms implemented to accomplish this task. The presentation will have three components. The first part will examine the history and evolution of the Summer B Program at Florida International University. The second part will address how the program currently operates, including resources and processes. The third part will review institutional data that potentially supports the effectiveness of the program on students' academic performance and retention. The presentation will encourage open discussion and information sharing among participants. We will also share how others may implement similar programs at their respective institutions.

Walpole, M., Simmerman, H., Mack, C., Mills, J., Scales, M., & Albano, D. (2008). Bridge to Success: Insight into Summer Bridge Program Students' College Transition. *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 20(1), 11-30.

Student Leadership Academy + Week of Welcome = Dedicated Orientation Crew

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Chair will share original research conducted to evaluate college orientation practices and share findings.

Chair will outline process used to establish buy in and set desired outcomes for new Orientation program.

Chair will share pre-change results from student surveys and highlight lack of faculty and student engagement.

Chair will share pilot experience and lessons learned. Following this, the process of bringing other academic centres on board will be shared - dealing with different faculty cultures and perceived engagement comfort levels.

Chair will share largest surprises, biggest resistance and greatest success.

Now what?

Chair will turn presentation over to other presenter to share experience with Orientation student staff and volunteers and the design of a Student Leadership Academy as a means to recruit high quality, dedicated student volunteers and the lasting impact throughout the year.

A video capturing the experience will be shared. (7 minutes)

The chair will share the results of a survey conducted with participants and quotes from them.

The session will end with a brief description of what is planned for 2009/10.

Strategies for Capturing and Assessing First-Generation Student Data

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As this is a roundtable discussion the hope is that the group as a whole will guide the discussion. The objective of the session is to encourage attendees to share their institutional best practices and to develop linkages amongst colleagues for future dialogue.

Promoting Student Success Through Emotional Intelligence

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Predictors of student success during the first year have traditionally focused on cognitive factors such as standardized test scores, high school grades and academic preparedness. However, a growing body of evidence suggests that a student's emotional intelligence (EI) also plays an important role. In fact, findings reported in the 2005 Journal of the First Year Experience and Students in Transition found a student's interpersonal skills, ability to adapt to change, and stress tolerance were associated with higher grade point average in a large sample of first year students (Parker et al., 2005).

This session will devote substantial discussion to the link between EI and student success. Participants will explore the history and theoretical framework for the EI construct and leave with an understanding of how emotional intelligence is defined and measured. Emphasis will be placed on the BarOn model of social and emotional functioning including a description of the first validated EI assessment, the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i). Competencies measured on the EQ-i will be shared and participants will be asked to provide examples of how these skills impact students.

Three model programs currently implementing EI will be presented. Dr. Patrick Kilcarr, Georgetown University, will share applications for fostering healthy behaviors and personal well-being through one-on-one work with students. Dana Copeland, Fanshawe College, will share how infusing EI into classroom activities promotes academic success in first-year business students. Finally, Oscar Lopez, Dell Scholars Program, will describe how EI serves as a strategy for scholarship retention supporting first-year students.

The session will encourage audience participation and will reserve time for questions.

Three Themes and Eight Weeks: How to Jumpstart the First Year

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The First Year Learning in Communities (LinC) was first offered as a learning community pilot program in 2005 that included an 8-week seminar course linked with two other general education courses. An assessment plan was developed at its inception to evaluate the program participant satisfaction and academic success, as well as instructor and peer leader feedback. After assessment results were gathered and analyzed in 2006, the program coordinator initiated a series of significant changes to the program, including the following: 1) The structure eliminated the connected course component, resulting in LinC as a stand-alone seminar; 2) as a participating institution in the American Democracy Project, Illinois State also became one of 8 institutions to participate in the Political Engagement Project. Campus and community involvement, civic engagement, and public awareness was incorporated as one of three major themes addressed in the course; 3) Two other themes (major/minor and career exploration and successful transitions to and within the university were also incorporated; 4) all course materials and resources were developed for web-based access; and 5) all new student athletes and University Scholars were required to enroll in the seminar. The emphasis of this session will focus on two major areas: 1) How the assessment plan and specific instruments were modified to provide the most accurate and useful results, and how the assessment results were incorporated into program planning to serve as a basis for all changes made throughout the duration of the pilot through its formal approval as a course in 2008; and 2) Future assessment plans to evaluate LinC's role in moving students through the initial transition to college toward a longer term of campus and community involvement within the constructs of an 8-week seminar. To date anecdotal evidence indicates that the seminar has had a positive impact on involvement and participation.

The Importance of Individual Efforts in Supporting First-Year Student Retention

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Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) has for the last ten years been dedicated to a comprehensive effort to increase the retention rates for freshmen, and the campus has been remarkably successful. The one-year retention of freshmen has risen from 55% in 1997 to 68% in 2007. But several years ago, the campus experienced a small setback. The retention numbers didn't increase that year; they actually fell by a small percentage point. Had we retained just 21 more freshmen that year, our rates would have increased. That realization gave birth to a new project, the IUPUI 21 Club.

With the 21 Club project, we were able to reframe our retention efforts to concentrate on our successes instead of our failures. Each spring semester, all returning freshmen are sent a survey,

asking them to identify one person (faculty, administrator, academic advisor, staff member, or student) at IUPUI who has helped them succeed and to explain how. That data is collected and analyzed. Those nominated by the students are recognized in their home units and throughout the campus. This session will demonstrate the strategies for collecting the data, the analytical results over several years, and the impact on the campus.

The session will begin with introductions of the presenters, and will ask audience members to introduce themselves with regard to their role in working with first-year students.

Next, the audience will be engaged in a reflective writing activity where they will discuss who made a difference in their undergraduate first-year success.

Next the presenters will detail the IUPUI 21 Club project.

Next we will have the participants in small groups discuss ways they can enhance retention on their campuses by highlighting the efforts of individuals.

Finally, we will end with a question and answer period.

Technology and the First-Year Experience

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Madigan and Goodfellow (2005) suggest that access to technology may be a factor impacting undergraduate student success. Additionally, Freeman, Field, and Dyrenfurth (2001) submit that technology can positively impact the undergraduate experience. More particularly, technology can be of benefit to students enrolled in a learning community. And finally, Stone and Madigan (2007) highlight the gap between technological competence and perception of first-year students.

The institute hosting the present study has a robust first-year experience program and has access to multiple learning technologies. Each first-year experience course is composed of an instructional team. Each instructional team is composed of the following: faculty (instructor), academic advisor, librarian, and student mentor. However, no data has been collected to date to determine the connection between first year experience technology use and assessment of technology use. As a result, the current study was formed. In particular, the research question 'What technologies are most prevalent in first-year experience courses' along with the research question 'How are the technologies assessed' guide the current study.

With institutional review board (IRB) approval a survey was constructed and refined for dissemination to the instructional team of first-year experience courses. The survey was composed of both quantitative and qualitative items. The ending return rate for the survey was 40%; for an N of 80.

Descriptive data analysis indicated the role of the instructional team most apt to adopt technology is the faculty member, followed by the student mentor, the academic advisor and librarian. Additionally, of the 10 technologies identified in the survey only 4 emerged as being significantly adopted. These were (a) course portal (ONCOURSE) (b) e-mail (c) learning software and (d) digital video recordings, in that particular order. A striking finding was that

assessment rates were nearly non-existent. Discussion will follow focusing on these findings and implications therein.

Developing and Assessing High-Impact Educational Programs to Support First-Year Student Learning and Success

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In this session, we will summarize the effects of participating in “high-impact” practices on other college experiences and self-reported outcomes. In consultation with experts, we developed sets of items about learning communities, student-faculty research, student independent research, and study abroad, and added them to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). To illustrate, the learning communities’ items ask about the nature of the program and co-enrolled courses, and to what extent participating in the learning community contributed to essential learning outcomes and the student-faculty research items ask about aspects of the collaboration, the kind of data collected and where (library, lab, field work, etc.), the student’s role in the research process, and the extent the research experience contributed to essential learning outcomes.

Learning communities, student-faculty research, and other high-impact practices are effective because they create conditions whereby students devote more effort to their learning, interact more with faculty and peers (which exposes them to diversity), get more frequent formal and informal feedback, and practice and apply what they are learning to real-life situations. As a result, students typically invest more of themselves in their studies and benefit more.

The session will present these research findings and then we will engage participants in discussion about campus approaches to assessing these practices using NSSE and other institutional data sources, approaches to ensuring the participation of underrepresented first-year students, and how different campuses structure experiences to maximize student learning. IUPUI will share how they have examined these practices on campus and their approaches to ensuring that more urban commuter first-year students realize the benefits these high-impact practices. We will build in time to discuss with participants the implications of our findings for improving the organization and structure of programs and practices on their own campuses and for expanding student access to high-impact practices.

Examining the impact of an Intensive First-Year Seminar on At-Risk Students

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To begin, the design of the first year program as it is enacted on the Indiana University Southeast campus will be described. The speakers will then describe the design of the intervention as it varies from the standard design of the First Year seminar course. The intervention course was designed to target conditional admit students more intensively during the first 7 weeks of the semester on the assumption that the standard course may not address study skill issues soon enough for the conditional admit students who need help to work at the college level starting the first day of the semester. A brief description of the control group which was essentially a standard FYS class will also be described. The results of the College Student Inventory which was given to all students participating in this study will be shared, identifying similarities and differences between the two samples. The assessment results pertaining to retention, GPA and types of courses taken by the students will be discussed in relation to the impact of the intensive FYS course. Implications for both conditional admit and standard admit populations at a commuter campus will then be addressed.

Thinking Outside the Box: Moving From Multiple Choice to Authentic Assessment With Millennial Learners

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Another semester begins. Students wait expectantly as professors review syllabi, learning objectives, required activities and assignments, and the procedures that will be used to assess their learning. In a vast majority of these classrooms, one of the primary means used to assess student learning will be some form of testing in the guise of quizzes and examinations. For many of the over 16 million students enrolled in degree-granting institutions during the 2008-2009 academic year, it is very likely that written examinations will be a significant factor in determining the degree to which they have “learned” the required course content (often interpreted as their final grade). Extrapolating from the work of Milton (1986), if each of these students are enrolled in an average of eight courses per year, and each course involves an average of two tests, there will be almost 260 million tests given during the 2008-2009

academic year! Sad but true. Testing is alive and well in higher education. There have been several attempts to create criteria for “good” testing practice. Angelo and Cross (1993) have proposed that classroom assessments should be teacher-directed, mutually beneficial (i.e., students in learning, faculty in the assessment of teaching), formative, context-specific (i.e., responsive to the needs and characteristics of students, teachers, and disciplines), ongoing, and rooted in good teaching practice. Wergin (1988) asserts that good practice in assessment results in: 1) Improved teaching and learning, 2) A focus on what is maximally relevant, and 3) A mechanism for informing students about what they know or can do. This session will focus on providing participants with a minimum of ten ways to assess student learning that go well beyond the traditional tendency to rely on objective assessment strategies.

Establishing an Academic Cornerstone Through Self Exploration: An Attempt at Academic and Career Advising

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This poster session will outline, and report on, the course design of the FYE program developed by the Academic and Career Advising Division of the compulsory foundation college (the University College of Cornerstone Education) of the J.F Oberlin University. The concept of the course is to help first year students to engage with the university’s Learning Community.

Specifically, four elemental skills the students are expected to learn are set for this course: (1) understanding fellow students; how to establish contacts, (2) self-exploration; exploring their own concerns and desires by communicating with others, (3) giving expression; learning how to express their thoughts logically to fellow students, and (4) critical thinking; helping students recognize how different ideas expressed through communication should connect to the development of their own self-exploration and analytical and critical thinking skills.

The course consists of a 14-class semester and eight themes. (1) Introducing yourself and others, (2) Making names cards and sharing them with classmates, (3) Messages from senior students, (4) Messages from the administrative staff, (5) Introduction to career exploration, (6) Introduction to critical thinking, (7) Photos and interviews for the college posters, and (8) writing a paper reflecting on themselves through the course content.

The purpose of this program is to help students acquire knowledge and skills, and also to allow them to have experiences that help them realize themselves through communicating with others. “Fellow students” are not only classmates but also the people around them, thus in order to help students recognize themselves as members of the Learning Community as a whole, chances are given for the students to communicate with senior students and administrative staff, as well as for some activities outside of class. The qualitative analysis of the students’ final papers shows that students do actively try to spend a successful college life.

A Mutually Beneficial Partnership: Supplemental Instruction and Learning Communities

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This session presents information about Supplemental Instruction (SI) and its involvement with learning communities (LCs) at Kennesaw State University. It will focus on a case study of SI in a themed Learning Community comprised of two courses with an enrollment of 25 students each and then a large course with up to 200 seats. This combination of courses is not uncommon. In our case study we will look at such a learning community which included SCI 1101 (200 seats per section). The course is comprised of students from three or four learning communities combined.

SI is offered on campuses around the world and targets historically difficult courses on each campus. Historically difficult courses are those that traditionally have high rates of Ds, Fs, and Ws as final grades. We will share what SI is, how it works and its claims. We will also share information about themed first year learning communities at KSU. All full-time, first-year students with fewer than 15 credit hours are required to sign up for either a learning community or a first-year seminar. With the additional support afforded by Learning Communities, students are much more likely to be successful at KSU.

FYP Faculty Involvement with SI will be discussed. Some FYP professors include SI visits as one of the campus “events” that students should participate in. Other FYP faculty allow us to make brief presentations to their classes about SI and study skills.

We will share our methods of assessment and present our findings based on end of term surveys (completed by students), faculty surveys, SI leader surveys, grade analysis and DWF rate comparisons. Additionally, we will present the benefits of Learning Communities and discuss why both SI and LCs complement each other so well.

Strategies in First-Year Programming to Improve Student Success

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Kennesaw State University employs multiple strategies in programming for first-year students to foster student success. In 2007 University College at KSU created a Department of First-Year Programs that provides an identifiable academic home for first-year students. KSU’s Learning Communities program and its First-Year Seminar course (KSU 1101) have both been shown to increase student success, as measured by first-to-second year retention. KSU 1101 is an academically rigorous course that embodies four sets of learning outcomes: life skills;

strategies for academic success; campus and community connections; and foundations for global learning. The effectiveness of the course is measured by student performance on exams, by written essays and reflections, and by oral presentations. Pre- and post-testing have also been used to demonstrate the effectiveness of various strategies employed in the course. Academic advising and connection to the institution are two factors known to promote student success. Since fall 2006 advising teams consisting of faculty advisors, professional advisors, and student peer advisors, have been associated with some (2006, 2007) or all (2008) KSU 1101 sections. The faculty advisors and the professional advisors work together to provide quality academic advising. The student peer advisors often help the students in their sections make connections to the institution. Data indicate significant increases in GPA and retention for first-year students who take advantage of the advising team provided to them. Another strategy used is a common reader that is employed each year in KSU 1101. This book selection (different each year) serves as a focal point for civic engagement activities and for developing, in first-year students, an awareness of global issues. This is further strengthened by bringing the author of the common reader to campus each year. Each of these strategies and others, as well as the associated assessment data, will be discussed in greater detail.

First-Year Retention Initiatives: The Kettering University Experience

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Kettering University, with its unique blend of academic terms interleaved with co-operative experiences beginning freshman year, faces significant retention hurdles. We have witnessed a statistically significant jump in first year retention from a ten-year average of 84.9% (maximum 89.5%) to 94.3% for the 2007 freshman cohorts. This rapid increase in retention resulted from an enhanced culture of flexibility and responsiveness, a direct result of strong leadership within Academic Affairs, and a comprehensive approach to the issue. This presentation discusses several of the retention initiatives that contributed to our success, but it focuses in particular on a creative new course: ORTN-101, The First Year Experience.

Research has shown that three major causes for student attrition are: unclear or new goals; difficulty in making the transition from high school to college; and feelings of isolation. First year students need continued guidance, support, and resources to develop the skills and talents to balance the rigorous coursework, professional work, and student engagement that Kettering University requires of them. ORTN-101 serves as the springboard that launches students to be prepared to encounter the challenges and opportunities that Kettering University provides.

ORTN 101 delves into how to adapt socially, academically, and professionally in the Kettering University culture through bolstering student confidence, helping students assimilate into the Kettering University lifestyle, navigating issues with co-op employment, developing sound academic habits, getting socially involved via organizations and activities, and peer-to-peer and student-faculty mentorships. These objectives are achieved in a unique instructional model that utilizes a course coordinator, faculty volunteer, and upper-class student volunteer.

Some of the topics covered:

- Achieving faculty and student volunteer “buy-in”
- Organization and coordination of topics and schedules
- Lessons learned from four cycles of ORTN-101: surprises, successes, and modifications; student assessment of the results
- Taking the next step: a second orientation course.

Enhancing First-Year Students’ Academic Literacy: An Intervention Study

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This paper addresses the widely recognized need to support first-year students in the acquisition of academic literacy (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis 2006). It presents a writing intervention that was carried out with a first-year undergraduate cohort of 68 students in a Social Sciences programme. The intervention recognized the need, stressed by Academic Literacies and EAP researchers (Lea & Street, 2006; Wingate, 2006), to embed writing instruction in the subject teaching. Various reading assignments, in-class and online writing tasks, as well as formative assessment measures, were integrated into two first-year modules. The students received tutor and peer feedback on these tasks before they had to write their first assignment. The research objectives were 1) to assess the feasibility of embedding writing instruction into a content-intensive curriculum, and 2) to assess the impact of the formative feedback provided to students throughout the first term. The intervention was evaluated by a student questionnaire, interviews, and a text analysis in which the final assignment was scrutinized for effects of previous feedback.

The intervention was perceived as helpful by the students, and resulted in overall improvements in the final assignment. However, a comparison with the results of previous cohorts showed that the intervention has resulted in a greater gap between high and bottom achievers, with far fewer average performers. This indicates that the intervention had benefited receptive students while others seemed to be ‘feedback-resistant’. Student interviews confirmed previous research findings (e.g. Haggis & Pouget, 2002) by revealing that the gap is partly due to factors that lie outside higher education such as expectations or lack of preparation at school. The paper concludes that for some students more individualized measures for literacy enhancement may be needed.

Rollercoaster Ride of a Lifetime: The Peer Leader Journey

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An overview of Lyndon State College and a description of our first year program will open the session. A brief history of Peer Leaders at Lyndon State will then introduce the heart of this presentation. How and why the Peer Leader was created will be the two primary questions answered and discussed. Once the foundation for the session has been established, the

presentation will shift to the more specific components of how the Peer Leaders are recruited, selected, and trained , and what their roles and responsibilities are throughout the year.

Recruiting and selecting Peer Leaders is the first step toward building a team. Participants will gain tips and ideas for developing a process that will build a team representative of the diversity within the campus community. The team building theme will continue with training and development. Providing training in a manner that will ensure not only the preparedness and success of each Peer Leader, but also build a cohesive team, is critical for the overall success of our Peer Leader model. Information and materials used at Lyndon State will be shared to convey this message.

The presentation will conclude with an explanation of the responsibilities of Peer Leaders and the development of relationships between them and their students. In addition to serving in the freshman seminar classrooms, Peer Leaders are used in many first year initiatives including SOAR, Fall Kick-Off, Fall Workshops, ceremonies, and early alerts processes. Participants will see the contracted responsibilities and hear about the successes and areas of improvement for the connection of Peer Leaders within each of these areas.

In order to help tie in the Peer Leader experience, video clips will be embedded throughout the presentation. Hearing from the Peer Leaders themselves will help convey their thoughts and sentiments along their journey.

You Can't Just Pay for Lunch: Creating Campus Commitment to Linked Courses

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Linking courses doesn't create learning communities all by itself. Any community is really created not by the structures created to support it, liked sets or pairs of linked courses, but by the members of the community as they learn together. Links at Lyndon were created by several years ago by an administration that believed, on the basis of good empirical evidence, that they would create cohort groups among students whose retention would be then improved simply by being a cohort. Several years after the links were in place, the award of a substantial grant inspired a pilot designed to encourage faculty to be more intentional about using those links to encourage learning communities to form, by sharing themes, assignments, and activities across two courses. This learning community pilot was designed, in particular, to support the first-in-family, moderate income students who constitute a large portion of the student population at Lyndon. The problems inherent in this initiative were several: 1) faculty who teach the courses were not involved in the creation of the initiative, 2) faculty did not have a clear understanding of what a "learning community" might be, and 3) there was little recognition that any community is really created not by structures like co-requisite courses, but by the individuals in the group. To solve these problems, and overcome the associated obstacles (including lack of faculty buy-in, need for information and education about learning communities, overly ambitious lists of learning outcomes, and resources available but not accessed,) Lyndon has

developed a multi-layered program of curriculum revision, faculty development, and cross-campus collaborations. This session will explore the bumpy landscape of the backfill required to create commitment from various different campus constituencies for a misunderstood initiative, including an exploration of different obstacles encountered, solutions found, and challenges still to be met.

Student Success, College Quality, & the First-Year Experience: What Really Matters

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This workshop will examine traditional assumptions and popular myths about what determines college "quality." The case will be made that college quality should not be defined in terms of the type of students that an institution admits or rejects (selectivity), but in terms of the nature of the experiences that students have after admission, and how students change in attitude, behavior, and/or cognition between entry and exit. Key outcomes or indicators of student success will be identified (e.g. student persistence, academic achievement, holistic development) key research-based principles of student success will be delineated (e.g., self-efficacy, active involvement, social integration, personal meaning, mindfulness) and practices will be discussed that have the potential to exert synergistic effects on student learning, student motivation, and student retention.

The International First-Year Experience: Universal Themes, National Variations

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An audience-centered discussion of international similarities and differences in the nature of the FYE and approaches to it. Universal themes and national differences will be explored through questions such as: Why is there interest in the FYE? (What's fueling it?) Who is involved? Who are its supporters and saboteurs? What are its target areas? When are interventions taking place? How is it delivered? What is working and failing? What are its challenges, obstacles, and threats? In what direction does it seem to be moving?

The focal points or target areas for FYE programming will be discussed, such as: new-student orientation, curriculum, pedagogy, co-curriculum, academic advising, academic (learning) support services, student-support (psychosocial) services, faculty involvement, administrative support, and governmental involvement. National differences and similarities will be discussed in terms of whether program delivery is intentional, student-centered, intrusive, proactive, personalized, diversified, holistic, and collaborative.

Transitional Adjustment Tools

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A preponderance of literature links preparation and socio-economic status to student performance. However, a developing body of literature recognizes other variables as significant contributing factors. William Sedlacek's scholarship has identified 7 non-cognitive variables that influence student success. Two of those variables are self-esteem and connection with a strong support person. Students in large universities, particularly students from urban cities, often feel estranged and isolated and need increased guidance to negotiate college successfully. Generally, advisors become the allies who provide the necessary support.

Despite students' backgrounds, often they enter the university with high self-esteem. They believe that the success that they enjoyed in high school will follow them into college. Early intervention is important in order to help students remain positive. Our program advisors utilize a gamut of tools that foster student adjust as they experience incremental successes.

Frequent advising provides a structured support plan and it creates an opportunity for students to build rapport with a strong support person. Early interventions and connections at pivotal points throughout the semester help students monitor their progress. An advising syllabus extols the advantages of task-orientated advising, and establishes advising as serious academic management sessions.

Students keep an advising folder. The folder contains a Course Tracking form with grade feedback, tests and major assignment schedules, and professor contact information. Strength based advising undergirds our approach; it keeps intervention positive and self-validating. By focusing on students' strengths, we enhance their academic and personal potential. We employ intrusive advising which includes advisor/student/professor conferences. While advisors model asking meaningful questions, the shared conference serves to lower the artificial barriers between students and their professors. "Biblio-Advising" is a convenient way to impart messages through motivational and informative articles. These and other advising tools help students chart their progress and achieve their academic goals.

Flexible Learning Environment: A Pedagogical Model for Student Success

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The model is concrete and designs flexible environments for learning and wants to describe tools and strategies. The model uses quality standards and presents very frankly what can be offered and which the demands are. The university makes sure that the lecturers have the necessary qualifications by presenting a competence profile for Mid Sweden University and that students have the necessary qualifications by presenting a Mid Sweden Student Profile. Both lecturers and students have to know what to do and how to become successful in studies. The university has to take the necessary steps to stimulate and to facilitate the work and to guarantee that it can be done within a normal day-to-day-work. The model is gradually developing, tested and ready for systematic use. The first perspective reflects the environment for learning. Flexible environment for learning means several options for the students to choose and to design their own personal environment. Every student can choose where to be, when to study, tools for communication etc. The second perspective contents the lecturers' competence. The single lecturer can work by him/her/self. Lecturers are invited to seminars on each topic and to workshops in order to design a flexible environment for his/her course. The third is about the students' competence profile. It is necessary to have the right equipment as to computer and programs and it is necessary to know how to use them. The student is supposed to be able to design his/her individual study plan to choose learning strategies, to cooperate with other students etc. The fourth perspective reflects the organization. It is important that the organization supports the pedagogical idea and the plan for pedagogic development. It can be technical or pedagogical support but also programs, systems and frameworks in order to stimulate and facilitate to pedagogical quality and progress.

Implementing Strengths in a First-Year Program

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This session will focus on the successful implementation of a strengths-based approach to the first-year experience. The premise is that awareness of one's strengths, along with the knowledge to develop and apply those strengths to new situations or to overcome obstacles, gives students a foundation for succeeding in college. This foundation also increases a student's confidence and motivation resulting in greater engagement within the academic environment.

The presentation will highlight the strengths philosophy and its implementation into the first year curriculum at this small, private University. Processes and steps taken to implement, sample curriculum outline, and lessons learned during the implementation phase will also be shared.

Growing Faculty and Students in First-Year Seminar Learning Communities

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The FYS Program at Middlebury College has, in its 22 years, become a locus for faculty development in pedagogy and for curricular experimentation. Because seminars are required of all entering first-semester students, and because they are taught by full-time regular faculty across the curriculum, it turns out that every Middlebury faculty member teaches in the program every 3.5 years on average. So as the program experiments and grows, so do the faculty teaching in it. For example we began housing students by seminar in Commons (what we call our dormitory clusters) and affiliated the seminar instructors with the Commons in which their students were housed. We will share outcomes from this affiliation. More recently, we integrated teaching and learning services into resource teams of professional staff and student peer mentors, and assigned a team to each seminar. (Each team includes a reference librarian, and educational technologist, a peer writing tutor, and an "ACE" or peer Academic Consultant for Excellence.) In the presentation we will examine the synergy that results when such cross-campus collaborations work well. We will present an overview of the program, and then faculty will show how their seminars in particular and their teaching in general have changed and grown as a result of the combination of challenge and support that the FYS offers both their students and them. We will discuss how this team approach to integrated teaching/learning support can prod seminars to become mini learning communities in which both faculty and students take more risks, are more ambitious in what they ask of themselves, and move more naturally toward giving back to the communities from which their resources are drawn. Finally we will present recently analyzed data from a longitudinal study of the Class of 2010 suggesting how students grow within these FYS learning communities.

Seamless Transitions: A Guide to Latino Student Success

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The presenters will welcome and introduce the session to program participants. The first few minutes will be dedicated to getting to know the session participants using a quick ice breaker. The presenters will begin with an overview of Northeastern Illinois University and its El Centro campus followed by an in-depth description of the Motivating and Engaging students Towards Academic Success (METAS) program and its components:

- Recruitment and Admissions – Staff collaborates with Chicago area high schools, community centers and community colleges to identify, inform, and guide prospective students through the admission and registration processes.
- Alternative Admissions Program - Students that do not meet the general admissions criteria, but demonstrate academic potential may be considered for alternative admission to NEIU.
- Summer Transition Program (STP) - STP is a six-week program which prepares high school

graduates and recent GED holders for a successful transition to Northeastern Illinois University.

- **First-Year Experience (FYE) Seminar-** FYE is a university-wide initiative that engages students in activities designed to ensure their success in higher education through a series of classes called the FYE Colloquium (FYE 109) and out of class events specifically targeted for first-year students.
- **Academic Support and Co-Curricular Programs –** The program offers holistic academic advising, tutorial assistance, academic workshops, and mentorship opportunities, as well as a variety of co-curricular programs designed to assist students to accomplish their personal, academic and career goals.

Next, the presenters will share quantitative and qualitative data collected which documents the success of the program. Lastly, the presenters will share make recommendations for the development and implementation of similar programs at other institutions in the United States and abroad. Presenters will dedicate 10-15 minutes for questions and comments from audience participants. Presenters will use a mix presentation approach including, PowerPoint, handouts, and interactive activities to engage participants.

Engaging Students: One Size Does Not Fit All!

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While research has long supported the correlation between engaging students and student retention, engaging students can be challenging and, particularly at a commuter campus, one size does not fit all. This session will focus on a programmatic approach to engaging first year students at Ohio University Southern, a small (<2000 students) commuter campus. Specifically, the presenter will share insight concerning the benefits and challenges of developing learning communities, community partnerships, and special events as methods to increase student engagement both on and off campus. Consideration of the engagement of non-traditional students will be discussed. Suggestions for planning and implementing program components while working with a limited budget will be presented, as will ideas for garnering administrative support and for involving various campus constituents. The results of a survey designed to assess student, faculty, and administrative perception of the impact of program components on student learning will be provided.

Implementing a Common Reading at a Commuter Campus

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Common reading programs are often used to develop a sense of community among college students. While many college and universities have adopted common reading programs, a review of literature indicates vast differences in the curricular integration of these programs beyond orientation. Presenters in the session will discuss the implementation of a common reading program at a commuter regional campus, from selection of the text through integration into the classroom. Specifics of integration into the curriculum in Communication, English, University Experience, and Learning Community Seminar courses will be offered, as will information regarding campus and community activities related to the common reading. The results of a survey designed to assess faculty perception of program implementation and impact on student learning will be provided.

Retention to Completion Project: Raising the Bar on Retention, Transfer, and Graduation Rates

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Patrick Henry Community College, in attempts to increase student retention, embarked on a comprehensive initiative funded by Title III and the Integrated Advising, Testing, and Career Center was born. The presentation describes the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of a comprehensive retention model. The session will focus on a rather brief description of Patrick Henry Community College from a historical perspective which outlines items that address the institutional culture that make this type of comprehensive project possible. Next, the data-driven rationale for the project will be discussed. Specific assessment measures will be cited that prompted the development of project strategies such as inadequate advising processes and procedures, high number of under-prepared students, low institutional retention rates, transfer rates, placement rates, and graduation rates. Then, the presentation will describe the development process. Here, the implementation of advisement enhancements will be described in detail, including programmatic implementation based on best practices in the areas of career resources, advising, retention, and transfer. Benchmarks related to evaluated institutional goals will be discussed, as well as a comprehensive evaluation section based on assessment data, which will highlight outcomes based on data driven decision making. Major accomplishments include significant increases in the retention, transfer, and graduation rates.

First-Year Students' Perceptions of the Quality of Their Learning

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This session reports analysis of more than 400 responses to an anonymous online survey of first-year students at Queen's University concerning the quality of their first-year learning experiences. The survey focuses on adjustment from high school to university, engaging learning experiences, and changes recommended to improve the quality of learning in the first year. Students were also asked several questions about uses of technology to support learning.

Invitations to participate in the survey were sent electronically to a random sample of 600 students drawn from the database of 3700 first-year students in the final week of the 2008-2009 academic year.

Most of the 22 questions requested qualitative responses in textboxes, yielding a large volume of qualitative material. Students were asked to describe distinctive features of their most and least engaging courses as well as the extent to which their marks reflect their effort and ability. Atlas.ti software is being used to identify themes, patterns and issues in the data. The final report will be a richly-textured analysis of students' impressions of the quality of their learning in their first year at Queen's.

The complete report of the study will be available online before the conference and the link will be shared with the audience. The presentation and paper will focus on significant patterns in the data as well as tensions and contradictions where student opinions showed considerable divergence. The findings of the survey will be summarized in a list of issues to be considered by those who teach first-year students when planning, conducting and assessing the quality of their work with these students. Stefinee Pinnegar of the Freshman Academy at Brigham Young University has agreed to join the conference presentation as discussant and critic.

Transition to University: The Impact of a First-Year Group Experience on Student Outcomes and University Fit

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Research has demonstrated how significant the transition to university life is for incoming students. Moreover, successful navigation of this transition impacts student retention on college campuses (Tinto, 1993). In an attempt to facilitate the transition to university life, most universities now offer support group interventions (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger & Alisat, 2005).

In Fall 2007, Queens initiated the Transition to University program (Pancer et al., 1995). In this program, students meet weekly for the first nine weeks of school in groups with upper classmen to discuss a number of relevant issues related to the transition to university life. When comparing the retention rate for students who entered the fall of 2007 with those who returned the fall of 2008, data indicated that 33% more students who had participated in T2U returned for a second year compared to first-year students who did not participate in the weekly meeting groups.

This study explored group dynamics as it relates to successful retention and individual outcomes and university fit. We proposed that group members who were more connected and sociable with their T2U group would report higher adjustment on a variety of measures, including loneliness, social adjustment, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. We also proposed that group members who were more connected and sociable with their T2U group would report more satisfaction with the university and better student-university match.

One-way ANOVAs indicated that group members who reported feeling more connected and sociable with their group reported less loneliness, self-silencing, and stress, and greater self-esteem, self-efficacy, and social support. Moreover, these group members also reported greater overall adjustment to university and university fit.

Discussion will focus on implementation of the program to increase student retention and adjustment to university. Future directions include exploring factors that increase a student's perception of connectedness with the group.

Reaching “At-Risk” First-Year Students Through the First-Year Seminar

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At San José State University (SJSU), we examined the extent to which our FYE seminar benefits three populations with lower-than-average retention rates: African Americans, Hispanics and students needing remedial work. Comparative analysis of five cohorts of students found that the FYE seminar improved one- and two-year retention rates for all categories of students, but that it was particularly valuable for African Americans and Hispanics. For students needing remedial work, the one-year retention rates were essentially identical to those not needing remedial work, but two-year retention rates were significantly better for students needing remedial work who took the FYE seminar.

We examined data for first-year students who entered between 2003 and 2007. Of 12,823 students, 4290 enrolled in our Metropolitan University Scholars Experience (MUSE) seminars, while 7533 did not enroll in any special FYE course.

Enrollment rates: Analyses found that African Americans, Hispanics, and student who needed remediation were slightly less likely than Asians or Whites and those who did not need remediation to actually enroll in a MUSE seminar.

Retention rates: African-Americans and Hispanics and those who needed remediation who did enroll in a MUSE seminar demonstrated a greater “boost” in retention rates from the first to second year than other students. The difference in one-year retention rates for all students was 4.1% over the 5-year period (82.1% vs. 78.0%), but it was 7.6% for African Americans and 6.4% for Hispanics. There were similar differences in two-year retention rates (4.1% overall; 9.2% for African Americans; 6.3% for Hispanics). One-year retention rates were the same for students who did and did not need remedial work, but there was a significant difference in two-year retention rates (4.9% for those needing remedial work; 2.9% for those who did not).

Possible reasons for these findings and their implications for practice will be discussed.

EI + C= The Best You Can Be! A First-Year Initiative That Encourages Emotional Intelligence Skills Through Coaching

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Participants who attend this session will learn the details of a first year initiative that promotes the development of emotional intelligence skills through the innovative College Coach Approach. A College Coach is a college employee who chooses to participate in the SUCCESS@Seneca program. Each coach takes an active interest in students' college progress, is willing to assist students in a variety of ways that will improve their emotional intelligence skills, and motivates them to successfully complete their college journey. The aim of the College Coach is to keep the students connected, on track, goal oriented and motivated. College coaches can help students establish goals, anticipate and troubleshoot problems, encourage them to explore and connect with the appropriate college resources and people, and promote self sufficiency.

Participants will discover how the College Coach Approach contributes to student success and personal effectiveness, engages a diverse and size-able employee population, creates a college culture that reflects a sense of community and pride and requires minimal employee time commitment, yet produces a significant impact with the college community.

The Power of Two: Researching the Effects of Peer Mentoring on Student Retention and Engagement

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Seneca College's well established SMILE (Student Mentoring in Life and Education) Program has served as a model for several colleges across Canada. The session will begin with a brief overview of this successful peer mentoring program at a multi-campus post secondary institution. The main part of the presentation will focus on our own research into the efficacy of peer mentoring at Seneca College. Through a PowerPoint presentation, the presenters will discuss the reasons for the research, the research design, implementation as well as the staffing

needs, costs, and the internal and external partnerships required to develop and execute the study. The presenters will share the research methodology, which included assembling a sample of 600 protégés and obtaining written consent, establishing a mirror image control group, as well as the use of an online questionnaire and focus groups for the purpose of data gathering. Quantitative and qualitative data will be shown and discussed in relation to data from the retention literature. The challenges of implementing a research project involving 600 students over two campuses will also be discussed. In addition, the presenters will briefly discuss other research projects in which the SMILE Mentoring Program is participating. These include a seven million dollar retention project involving three Ontario colleges and funded by the Millennium Scholarship Foundation, and new Seneca research on Intrusive Mentoring and Emotional Intelligence which is being initiated in partnership with the University of Trent in Peterborough.

Improving the Persistence Rates of First-Year College Students Through a Case-Management Approach and Financial Incentives

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Foundations for Success aims to improve the chances of student success and increase the colleges' overall graduation rate. The project methodology focuses on a random assignment research design, the most reliable approach to measure the impacts of changes in social policy. The presentation will outline the recruitment process for the three participating colleges. It explores the recruitment and the baseline characteristics of the 3,200-participant sample as well as the success in creating three statistically identical treatment groups. Students in the first group received a case-managed access to student support services based on the individual student's risk factors. Students in the second group received a case-managed access to student support services based on the individual student's risk factors alongside a financial incentive of \$750 for completing required program hours and completing each semester with at least a 2.0 grade point average. The third group is the project's control group, and students in this group continue to take advantage of all the existing college services. Foundations for Success is at the end of its two years of implementation. The presentation will thus share results on the level of participation in case-managed access to student support services. It also provides evidence of the improved academic performance and retention rates of students in the treatment groups in comparison with the control group. The evaluation has been conducted by a private sector firm—R.A. Malatest and Associates—to ensure the greatest level of independence.

Creating an Academic Focus in the First-Year Seminar by Connecting the Seminar, Liberal Education, and Career Development: One U.S. Model

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As background to the discussion, presenters explain to the audience the kind of institution they represent, where it is located, the specific region it proudly serves, and the mission it strives to fulfill. They briefly outline institution's liberal education program, University Studies, detailing its objectives, structure, and intended outcomes, noting how that program dovetails with students' major fields of study. They further explain how the program has nine life skills as the objectives of each course in the program, noting that the objectives stem from surveys of employers about the skills they seek in new hires. They emphasize the role of the present first-year seminar, UI100, in starting students' progress toward achieving those outcomes. Included in this background information is the genesis of the general education program in the mid to late 1980s, focusing on the evolution of the first-year seminar through all its iterations, of which the current seminar is the fourth.

They then describe the development of a series of career proficiencies as part of an institution-wide Transitions Initiative, detailing how the first of the four career proficiencies was included in the first-year seminar. They show participants how they might adapt such concepts to their unique situations, including how to cobble together textual materials to assist both students and instructors in examining these topics. Together participants and the presenters discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having an academic focus in first-year seminars by developing and using the seminar to help students connect academic planning and career planning. Finally, the presenters invite the members of the audience to suggest other ways institutions might use first-year seminars to achieve these purposes.

Establishing and Sustaining a Connected Living and Learning Community

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The academic literature is clear: the early weeks on campus truly matter for new first-year students, affecting their likelihood of progressing (Tinto 1988, 2006); Astin (1977, 1993); Kuh (2007, 2008). Moreover, as Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and Kuh (2008) observe, many variables within the campus environment itself impact student retention: academic offerings, residential programming, and the overall culture of the institution. New students need to feel connected to each other, to faculty, and to the campus community.

In the fall of 2007, SVC instituted a first-year course with strong community service projects attached to it, Quest for Success. Yet, while that course has been both beneficial and needed, as we will discuss, it was a precursor to more innovations that we believe are helping to establish connectivity on the SVC campus. We experimented with new, out-of-the-box, cost-manageable initiatives and then measured short-term effect and effectiveness.

We began with two ideas: (1) connecting with students before they even arrived on campus and

(2) intentionally and overtly linking pre-Orientation initiatives with both Orientation itself and events planned for students during the first few weeks on campus. We endeavored to create a quilt of events during a twelve-week period, and we will discuss the following in detail:

Pre-Arrival Engagement of New Students
Parent Programming
Post-Orientation Six Weeks
Post the first Six Weeks of Classes
What the Data Show: The Trends are Evident

In addition, we offered nine sections of our award-winning, first-year seminar, Quest for Success, with its centerpiece being a number of service learning projects in Greater Bannington. From the new activities to the Quest for Success program, SVC's retention work truly had to be "of a piece," modeling and mirroring the connectivity we sought to create for our students. We will offer data that show we have been successful.

Beyond Socratic Seminar: New Leadership Paradigms

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Touchstones discussions are an integral part of any structured FYE program concerned with the attitudes, behaviors, and skills that are key to leadership. Such skills include active listening, speaking, reasoning, comprehension, and teamwork. This presentation explains how specifically selected and edited works (philosophy, literature, history, art) serve as the starting point of Touchstones discussions. These texts, along with individual work, small-group activities, guided full-group discussions, and post-discussion analysis and evaluation are critical tools for developing collaborative leadership.

The presentation outlines four stages that all Touchstones groups experience. Each stage has distinctive and characteristic obstacles and outcomes. For example, issues such as power, certainty, respect, and control are central in early stages, as participants reflect on the text, experience, the group's progress, and their own participation. As Touchstones groups evolve to advanced questioning, reasoning, and problem solving, student participants learn to monitor and evaluate their development and strategize to improve the overall effectiveness of their discussion. Participants gain crucial experience in self-reflection and self-governance and become more effective leaders—individually and collectively. Case studies, video clips, anecdotal evidence, and testimonials will illustrate the effectiveness of the Touchstones approach.

In addition, the presentation covers the leaders' role and the training needed to run Touchstones discussions. Touchstones leaders must learn to transition authority to students gradually and systematically, as the program's ultimate goal is for students to run discussions themselves as collaborative participants and leaders.

Throughout the presentation, the particular relevance of the Touchstones method to the FYE will be highlighted. Touchstones develops cognitive and behavioral skills crucial to successful engagement and leadership in the college environment and beyond. In Touchstones, students share responsibility for the community they build with their peers, learn the value of all perspectives, and prepare themselves to flourish personally and professionally in an emerging,

fluid, and globalized world.

Multiple Student Voices: What Makes an Effective Tutorial?

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The First-year Academy (FYA), a systemic initiative focusing on first-year success, was implemented at Stellenbosch University (SU) in 2007. At that time, the use of tutorials to provide additional academic support was under-utilized at the University and one of the FYA's earliest actions was to provide support for the development and extension of tutorial programmes. The FYA founding document highlighted the potential value of the tutorial in supporting teaching and learning by promoting opportunities for student engagement and peer-assisted learning that are often absent from most traditional first-year classes.

Since the inception of the FYA, substantial funds have been invested, numerous tutors have been trained and growing numbers of first-year students have been exposed to the tutorial in one form or another. However, while the advantages of such programmes are generally accepted, budgetary constraints and limited teaching resources can often hinder the sustainability of these initiatives. In the interests of being accountable for the investment in resources and acknowledging the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure sustained funding and support, a student feedback system was implemented. This system reports on all aspects of the tutorial, specifically the extent to which students regard the tutorials as useful.

In this paper we report on the responses of 811 Economics 114 students collected at the end of the first semester in 2008 as part of a larger research project. The results, highlighting what students' value in the tutorials, underscore the need for adopting flexible modes of delivery and for ensuring the ongoing review of entrenched modes of teaching that might be hindering student participation. It is hoped that the study will, firstly, lead to the optimization of tutorials and other forms of peer-assisted learning at SU and secondly, will contribute to the existing literature on the first-year experience.

Transitions: Student Reality Check

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About Transitions: Student Reality Check

“Transitions: A Student Reality Check” is an internationally-endorsed publication that provides first-year students with information on topics such as mental health and mental disorders alongside information on sexual health, physical health, study skills, time management, and coping skills providing a context for education and de-stigmatization. The Transitions materials also include contact information for websites and organizations relevant to the problems discussed, promoting help-seeking behaviors. Furthermore, the materials can also be customized by each institution to include contact information for student services and/or community services, further enabling help-seeking behaviors (particularly self-referral).

The fundamental idea behind Transitions is that improving mental health literacy can improve students’ mental health. Theoretically, student mental health would be improved through use of Transitions by increased awareness of mental health and mental disorders, increased awareness of resources (student) and associated increased help-seeking behavior, increased awareness of need (institution) and increased support services, increased peer support, decreased feelings of isolation, and decreased stigma.

Mental Health Literacy – A Key to Student Success

Transitions: Student Reality Check is a mental health literacy program designed to improve awareness of mental health and mental disorders, increase help-seeking behaviors, increase supports and awareness of help resources, decrease stigma associated with mental health and mental illness, and decrease feelings of isolation.

Enhancement of mental health literacy is a mental health promotion strategy that may be effective at de-stigmatizing mental illness and increasing self-seeking behavior. It has been shown to have positive results in reducing stigma and empowering young people in a school environment. In the context of post-secondary school-based programming, mental health literacy means providing students with the information, support, skills and resources that will help them cope with the pressures and challenges they face during the transition from high school life to post-secondary school life.

Faculty/Librarian Partnerships: A Model for Interdisciplinary Collaboration

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Successful collaborations between teaching faculty and librarians can add value to the first year writing classroom as students struggle with what it means to engage in college level scholarship. This Roundtable discussion will encourage participants to share ideas, experiences, and best practices about the ways these partnerships help students make the paradigmatic shifts necessary to undertake the rigors of academic research and writing projects.

Professor Kathy Larsen and Librarian Bill Gillis will facilitate a conversation about how faculty/librarian partnerships enrich the classroom experience for first year learners. The crux

of their successful partnership is a shared spirit of inquiry that surrounds a few common ideas or questions:

- 1) Learning is a continuous process, for students and teachers alike. Therefore, where these partnerships are concerned, we have to be the learners we want our students to be!
- 2) How can we ask our students to have conversations we aren't willing to have ourselves?
- 3) Partnerships aren't one-sided!

This conversation will center around common themes of inquiry and exploration that both describe and inspire our ongoing collaboration. We will share elements of our conversations over the semesters, which include our deliberate engagement of questions about disciplinary; our philosophies (both shared and learned) about research and writing as recursive and generative practices; trial and error with assignment design and implementation; and our use of free writing in the classroom.

While we will offer observations about our own collaborative model, it is imperative to ask: What other kinds of things are going on? What are other people doing? What are other creative ways that faculty/librarian partnerships are working? Finally, it is important to ask questions of these partnerships, such as what defines success? What happens when they aren't working? And how can we work to make them better?

Professional Pathways: Helping Students Prepare Early for Life After Their Undergraduate Degree

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In general, American career courses focus primarily on general job search preparation (resumes, interviewing skills) or resources for how to select a career path. Professional Pathways is a program that began in 2006 as a method of providing career exploration and development focused on particular fields that do not necessarily require a specific major or degree. The seminars are one or two quarter credit hours and are graded pass/fail.

Information presented in this poster session will include current seminars and descriptions, assessment processes and results, and plans for the future. Materials provided on the table will include sample syllabi for current seminars and a summary sheet that can be taken by attendees.

Assessing the Experience of ESL Students: Involvement, Success, and Retention

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This study was conducted at an intensive, pre-college ESL program at a large, university in the Midwestern United States. Most of the students are in this program to achieve the level of competence in English required to pursue an academic degree. In an intensive ESL program like this one, students are not only immersed in the language, but also the culture. In addition

to offering English courses, field trips and other activities are arranged to facilitate the process of culturization and offer additional opportunities for students to practice English in a variety of settings.

In this study, student participation in social and cultural extracurricular activities over an academic quarter was tracked. All of the activities were optional and available to all students. Grades and improvement in scores in both MELAB (Michigan English Language Assessment Battery) and TOEFL (Test Of English as a Foreign Language) tests were used to evaluate student achievement. Where students enrolled in the following academic quarter was used as a measure of retention. Students who continued within the ESL program or who enrolled at a degree program within the university were defined as retained, while students who transferred or did not continue for other reasons were not. Two comparisons were made: student involvement and student success as well as student involvement and student retention.

As colleges and universities, and society in general, become more diverse and globalized, the needs of international students, many of whom are not native speakers of English, need to be addressed. Comparing the relationships described in this study is an important first step in assessing how well extracurricular social and cultural programs and activities meet the needs of this population. These programs and activities, if they meet the needs of these students, may be an important component to attracting and retaining them.

Peer Support: Who Benefits?

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The University of Manchester has a well established and internationally recognized Peer Support programme engaging over 1200 higher year student volunteers working in partnership with staff to enhance and personalize the student experience, assisting with transition into and within higher education.

Two distinct, yet complementary schemes exist within the Institution: Peer Mentoring and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS).

International published research has focused on the benefits of peer support to first year students. This round table discussion will draw from the experiences, observations and reflections of the session chair/facilitator and the participants to explore and discuss:

- Why do we implement peer support?
- Who are the wider stakeholders of peer support programmes?
- Who benefits from peer support and how?
- What evidence of benefits do we have?

This interactive session will encourage participants to share practice and models of peer support and to identify different methodologies for evidencing benefits at various levels within an institution. We will explore how such evidence can be utilized effectively and strategically in gaining value and support for initiatives.

Academic Integrity: Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism Using an Interactive E-Learning Tool

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Plagiarism is a widespread issue in many institutions and punitive measures have largely addressed the consequences of these practices. The aim of this project was to raise understanding of academic integrity and good academic practice and to do so in a supportive teaching and learning environment. The target audience was mainly first year students in a large multidisciplinary university. The tutorial encompasses four sections: Section 1 'Academic Integrity' (clarifies aspects of good academic practice); Section 2 'Acknowledging Sources' (addresses the author-date and footnote referencing styles); Section 3 'Working Together' (raises awareness of when group tasks can be collaborative, or collusive); and Section 4 'Good Writing Habits' (information on the writing sequence and key tasks, and the procedural consequences of plagiarism). Students must achieve a 100 percent pass mark across the four sections of the tutorial. The program collects marks from successful completion of certain activities, and stores this on a university database.

Aspects of importance in the technical design of the tutorial were its interface design, navigation and usability, and web advantages. Aspects of pedagogical design included: relevant contexts which help learners to construct new knowledge from existing knowledge; demonstrating new knowledge to the learner; enhancing learning by doing; student application of the new knowledge; self-paced learning; and addressing equity and diversity issues.

A two-year evaluation project with both quantitative and qualitative data indicated a significant improvement in student awareness of what constitutes plagiarism, a decline in the incidence of plagiarism, an enhanced understanding of the seriousness of plagiarism and its consequences. Key strengths of the tutorial are its clear and relevant information on referencing styles, collusion, collaboration and plagiarism, its good design, relevant language, ease of operation and the sense of relief that students' now understood how and when to reference.

Examining the Effects of Involvement on First-Year STEM Students' Learning Outcomes

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Broadening participation in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, particularly among women and historically underrepresented minorities, is a major global policy issue in higher education. National statistics suggest that STEM degree attainment rates among historically underrepresented racial/ethnic minorities (URMs) continue to lag behind those of White and Asian Pacific Islander (API) students. For instance, only 24% of URMs complete a bachelor's degree in STEM fields within six years of initial enrollment compared to 40% of White and 50% of APIs (Center for Institutional Data Exchange and Analysis, 2000). Some research shows that first-year students who enter college intending to major in STEM fields do not persist or decide to switch to a non-STEM field (e.g., Mendez, Burkirk, Lohr, & Haag, 2008). And research has shown that, on average, students leave STEM fields for both academic and social reasons, including difficulties developing mastery of content (i.e., learning)

and lack of involvement experiences (Astin, 1984; Levin & Wyckoff, 1991).

Despite existing research on the role that academic and social factors play in the students' success in general, STEM URMs in particular; few contemporary studies examine the effects of involvement on first-year STEM students' learning outcomes. This is the gap addressed by the study that is the focus of this presentation. As part of a larger study funded by the National Science Foundation ([NSF]; EHR Grant #0747304) that consists of both quantitative and qualitative components, this analysis presents only survey findings from Phase 1 of this multi-year project.

In this session, I will introduce the study's topic and invite participants to share from their experiences with students. Next, the study's methods and results will be summarized, including presentation of the final path model. Afterwards, the presenter will facilitate discussion around a handout of promising practices for broadening students' learning in STEM fields. The last 15-20 minutes will be reserved for Q&A and group dialogue.

Emotional Intelligence and Post-Secondary Success: Examining the Impact from First Year to Graduation

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The transition from high school to a post-secondary environment is known to be a stressful situation for many students. One important indicator of just how stressful this transition can be is the large proportion of 1st year students who end up failing or withdrawing. The reasons typically reported by students for leaving university include change of academic program, personal issues, financial concerns and health problems. Of these, personal reasons are often the most commonly cited and often include difficulties making friends, being away from existing friends and family members, dealing with newly found independence, and developing study habits for a new learning environment. Given the types of struggles faced by 1st year students it is not surprising that research has demonstrated a link between emotional intelligence (EI) and post-secondary success.

Although researchers have become interested in relationships among emotional and social competencies and post-secondary success, most of the existing work has focused on specific sub-groups (e.g., 1st year students) or explored a narrow feature of academic success (e.g., GPA over a single term or academic year). This presentation will examine the efficacy of a post-secondary mentoring program designed to increase student retention rates at different

years of study (1st year to graduation). The mentoring program is connected to a 1st-year experience project (now in its 5th year) that collects EI data with new students at the start of their 1st year of full-time academic study. Based on cut-off scores for the EI measure, several successive cohorts of students "at-risk" for academic withdrawal have been identified. The first cohorts have now been followed for 4 years. Retention rates for the students involved in the mentoring programs are significantly higher ($p < .05$) than the "at risk" students who did not participate. Details of the program are described in the context of why EI is important for academic success in a post-secondary environment.

Basic Essentials for Academic and Real-World Success (BEARS): A First-Year Experience Course Redesigned

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Courses specifically designed to help first-year students smoothly transition from high school to the rigors of college life have become a mainstay on campuses worldwide. Such courses not only provide opportunities for students to bond with classmates, become acquainted with their local communities, and get introduced to available support services, but oftentimes they help students hone their skills so they can succeed academically. The decision to enroll in such courses frequently rests solely with the student. At the United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), this is not the case. Following completion of an intense six-week, summer military indoctrination program where cadets have already bonded with shipmates, all fourth-class cadets (first-year students) are required to attend a mandatory first-year experience course twice per week during the fall semester. It is a course which requires constant review and adjustment in order to ensure its relevance to cadets' personal development and their transition into their future leadership roles.

This presentation chronicles the processes and challenges faced when transforming the academy's former Fourth Class Academic Orientation Program (FCAOP) course into BEARS: Basic Essentials for Academic and Real-world Success, which was specifically designed to: (1) systematically engage cadets in choosing their majors; (2) introduce cadets to the USCGA's academic policies, procedures, and academic support services; (3) provide opportunities for personal choice within course requirements; (4) connect cadets to the local community; (5) expand cadets' personal horizons; and (6) afford cadets opportunities for self-assessment and reflection.

BEARS's initial year of implementation yielded information that is not only useful to USCGA but also to other undergraduate institutions. Recommendations based on first-hand experiences, along with plans for future course modifications as a result of responses to an end-of-course survey completed by 98% of course participants and interviews with the course's 22 instructors, will be presented.

Organizing a Student-Centered University: A General Proposal Based on Knowing the First-Year Students as Learners

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The moment of entering at university is one of the most important moments in the personal development of people. The construction of the European Higher Education Area is a propitious conjuncture to organize the university efforts to offer an appropriate context in which students can develop all their potential.

The question is: are the universities being organized taking the student as the center of the teaching and learning process? The answer could be: not enough. Universities, concretely in Spain, have plenty of information about students who enter the University but this information is not organized in a learning process sense.

The present work offers a general framework in which a plan oriented to student can be designed and developed by universities at levels of design and implementation. This proposal includes the collecting of relevant information about freshmen in educational terms.

The key of the present work is to consider the student as a person who learns. Therefore, the proposal incorporates the use of different tools to obtain information about students as learners.

The gathering of information about personal factors of the students, as personality and concretely learning patterns, is relevant to know students as persons who learn. In this sense, the Learning Combination Inventory (based on Interactive Learning Model by Christine Johnston, 1996) is the proposed tool to analyze the students' learning patterns. This proposal is based on the recent research results and experience about their implementation in different universities.

The implementation of the proposal presented could contribute to achieve important objectives as the following ones: to help the university get organized as a centered-student university, to help teachers plan and develop their process of teaching adequate to students profile and to help students manage their own learning process making them aware of who they are and how they learn.

Identifying Social and Economic Factors in Supporting the First-Year Experience

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I intend to discuss an analysis of feedback and progression data gathered from first year undergraduates, in the context of our experience of developing and embedding transitional support at UCL. This presentation is structured in three sections in order to outline a complete trajectory for the programme.

Institutional Innovation

Initial challenges for the programme hinged on an academic and institutional culture that is skeptical about 'centralizing' programs that challenge traditional views of student support and achievement; that is, views that high achieving learners do not need, and should not receive, too much support at the start of their degree programme. Further, there has been inertia in some parts of UCL to the development of activities intended to integrate transitional support into teaching and learning strategies, including aspects of tutorial support.

Assessing Engagement

The Transition Programme includes various strands of activities, including peer mentoring, peer assisted learning, study skills workshops, icebreakers, information sessions, virtual discussion forums and web-based resources. These activities have been assessed for their impact and effectiveness especially from the point of view of data specific to the learners' socio-economic background and stated expectations of higher educational. Our main evaluative tools are progression data for students going into year two and detailed questionnaire feedback including the students' status and views of higher education before and after their first term of study.

Directions and Recommendations

We aim to build sensitivities in to our transition model that can differentiate for the needs of particular types of learner, developing responsiveness in to our provision so as to target particular sets of students with appropriate content and methods. In addition, in order to embed the programme, it is important to identify potential institutional partners and develop activities that are seen to support and extend existing provision.

Support Me! Develop Me! Retain Me! How a Reflective Skills Activity has Increased Student Engagement, Motivation, and Success

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This session will provide an opportunity to engage with the SaPRA (Skills and Personal Development Reflective Activity) tool, developed by Bradford University, UK.

We will cover:

1. How SaPRA works
2. Reflections from students and staff about engaging with SaPRA and the issues surrounding the development skills assessment activities and interventions
3. How SaPRA feeds into institutional policies and procedures and the impact SaPRA has had
4. Understanding how to approach embedding this type of activity within their institution

Interaction with the audience will be a key feature of our session, please come prepared to debate and discuss the issues!

Completing SaPRA enables students to reflect on prior learning experiences and think about the process of adjustment to degree-level studies. The outcomes of SaPRA feed into an action-planning and evidence-reviewing activity which kick-starts the personal development planning (PDP) process. Tutors receive an overview of a cohort's responses which identifies any areas needing additional support.

SaPRA has led to significant changes being made to the planning and delivery of 1st-year skills modules. Students report SaPRA has made them better prepared for university"... gave me a

great first impression” (student). Tutors like its relationship with PDP “SaPRA fits nicely into PDP” (1st year tutor).

SaPRA provides a key link between expectations and reality. Identifying where students lack confidence and helping them develop and enhance their skills has supported more effective engagement.

SaPRA was developed in response to feedback elicited through institutional research into the First Year Experience. Our SaPRA work has led to a transformation of how we deal with issues of:

- transition, initial engagement and ‘belonging’ within the university community
- retention of students, especially on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) courses
- engagement of local students living at home.

Intersecting Identities, Intersecting Insights: What are the Unique Insights of Faculty and Staff Who Hold a Dual Role as Parents of College-Going Students?

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This roundtable discussion, focused around the observations and insights proffered by participants drawn to the session based upon their dual role as college educator and parent of a college student, will follow a world café conversation format as outlined by Juanita Brown (2005) in her book, *The world café: Shaping our futures through conversations that matter*. A conversation guide incorporating information similar to that outlined below will be used by the facilitator to move the conversation forward and to help participants listen together for deeper patterns, insights, ideas, and questions.

Conversation Structure

Round One

- Parents divided into 4 groups by students’ attendance at parent’s institution of employment or another institution

- Groups select a recorder and a moderator/timekeeper

- Discuss

o “What draws you to this conversation?”

? “What has been your major learning or insight so far about your students’ college experience?”

- Round Two

o Parents consolidate from 4 to 2 groups

o Select new recorder and moderator/timekeeper

o Share insights from previous conversation (5 minutes) and add to them by discussing,

? “What are the dilemmas and opportunities presented through your unique dual role?”

? “How might your experiences as the parent of a college student inform your/our work?”

? “What’s the next level of thinking we need to address?”

- Round Three

o Consolidate 2 groups into 1 large group

o Recorders share insight highlights (2-3 minutes each)

o Discuss

? “What have you heard that had real meaning for you? What surprised you? What puzzled or challenged you? What question (s) would you like to ask now?”

? “How should or could we continue this conversation? What considerations do we need to take into account?”

? “What seed might we plant together today that could make the most difference to enhancing the first-year experience?”

No Time Like the Present: Engaging First-Year Students in Career Planning

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In 2007, our career center dedicated one position on its counseling staff to coordinate programming and outreach efforts for first-year students. We began by establishing the new position as the first point of contact (internally and externally) for all first year programming and outreach. We enhanced and standardized our presence at freshman orientation and added a parent open house. Beginning in the summer and fall of the first year, we increased our speaking engagements to college orientation classes, including creating interactive assignments to help students begin career planning. We have stepped up our outreach to parents to include a dedicated section of our career library for parent resources, designed a parent brochure outlining the career development process and expanded our online resources for families. We implemented a series of exploratory student workshops and taught an exploratory section of a freshman orientation course. We strengthened our relationship with our office of New Student Programs, and assisted with planning for our campus wide Weeks of Welcome and Family Weekend programs. We have also expanded our advertising and services in assisting students find part time employment, thereby helping students with both immediate and long term career needs. All of these initiatives are designed to engage freshman in the career planning process. We have seen an increase from 10% to 17% in the percentage of freshmen who utilize our services since we implemented these initiatives. This workshop will go into detail of our outreach to freshman, as well as discuss the assessment of our results. This will be an interactive workshop and participants will be encouraged to share best practices in encouraging first year career planning at their institutions

Academic Programming in Residence: A Comparison of Options

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The session will begin with an opportunity for participants to meet one another and share their experience with Academic Learning Communities (ALC). This will be followed by a brief introduction to the characteristics of the University of Guelph. Guelph is a mid-sized public university in Southern Ontario. The university has strong science and agricultural traditions, with over 90% of entering students living in residence. The students generally come from outside our local community, have high admission averages, 70% are women, and a high retention rate (~92% from year 1 to 2). Student Affairs has a strong influence on the campus culture, and the University has clearly stated Learning Objectives. All of these characteristics are significant when considering the manner in which our ALC were developed and are supported by the institution.

Participation in the ALC is a residence option at U. of Guelph, and the “clusters” are not tied to specific core courses. Rather, the clusters are designed to accommodate students with a wide range of courses within their academic discipline. With 30-50 students living in a common area, students can always identify someone from their cluster in their introductory classes. Goals and objectives for the Communities reflect this opportunity for students to make connections with a primary and secondary reference groups, and empower them to become independent learners. Clusters are staffed by “cluster leaders” who offer programming and support to the students. There is no charge to the students for this program. Budget implications will be shared.

ALC was formerly offered by the Office of First Year Studies, but the program was transferred to Student Housing Services about 7 years ago. This has been a positive move, with Cluster Leaders and other Academic student staff now being a part of the Residence Life Staff. The relationship of the student staff with each other and the residence student government is an important consideration when working with a program that operates in the same area as other university departments and groups. Core training and programming requirements will be reviewed in detail.

Evaluations of the program have been extensive. Characteristics of the cluster experience, such as meeting people in the same academic program, knowing and feeling comfortable about accessing university resources were rated extremely positive. They strongly agreed with statements about the helpfulness of living with other people in their academic program. A comparison of marks and retention rates of cluster participants and all other students has been compiled for several years. Data from Fall ‘99 - ‘06, shows that the admission averages for cluster members were approximately 1.2% higher than for those who did not choose to live in an academic cluster. At the end of the fall semester for these years, the cluster members’ academic averages were 2.4% higher than all others, and 2.9% higher than others at the end of winter semester. All of these differences were statistically significant. There was no significant difference between the retention rates of cluster members and others from 1st to 2nd year. The 4 year graduation rate was 10% higher for cluster members. These findings will be discussed in relation to other North American research on learning communities, and on the experiences of the participants of this session.

For the past two years, Academic Leaders and programming has been introduced to a group of students living in a residence hall of about 350 students. Without their consent, students were clustered by academic program and provided with identical academic enrichment as those living in the self-selected clusters. Academic outcomes and student evaluations will be shared.

Closing the GAP on Student Satisfaction: A Cross-Discipline Approach for Developing Student-Centered Programs and Services

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This program will begin with an overview of the challenges that the UNLV College of Business Advising Center faced in meeting the needs of their students and the need to develop student-centered advising services. Attendees will learn how student services can benefit from a unique partnership with college faculty who have expertise (such as customer service and auditing) that compliment their service delivery goals. Attendees will get an overview of the strategy that the UNLV College of Business Advising Center used to design a student-centered model for advising that incorporated sound business principles. To illustrate this approach, attendees will receive a brief overview of the GAP Model for Effective Customer Service (Parasuraman, Ziethaml and Berry, 1988) that includes concrete examples for how it was used to improve services. As a result of attending this presentation, attendees will have a better understanding of how to: a) define and deliver services that at student-centered; b) use a GAP Model for Improving Customer Service with measurable results; and c) develop collaborative relationships between student services and faculty which can be a natural “win-win” for the college.

Evaluating an Outdoor Adventure Program as a First-Year Seminar

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The workshop includes an introduction to the research, A five minute discussion on methodology and then a major focus on the results. The results will be presented in a manner to encourage questions, along with slides showing the statistical evidence that led to the conclusions in this study.

Results

The class began with challenging activities and a group of students eager to form social bonds. The peer leaders promoted group norms that focused on trust, support, and honesty, creating a social situation where students reported deep peer connections.

Key to the effectiveness of adventure activities is that they are both challenging and authentic. The use of a consequential environment in this study resulted in college students developing bonds with their peers. In the adventure class the motivation to engage and participate with the program derives both from a desire for personal comfort and the fear of a negative social reaction. In a small, interdependent group camping and traveling together, students cannot hide or shirk expectations the way they might at a large campus social event or between classes.

A second distinctive feature of the adventure class is trust. Students reported that one of their favorite aspects of the adventure class was the honest and revealing discussions in the evenings where they felt they really “got to know” the other students.

Overall, the adventure condition matched or exceeded the aggregate mean factor scores when compared to the FYE condition. The adventure condition produced significantly higher mean

scores on a number of factors.

The result that merits further review is the importance of trust in productive academic discussions. Trust may be an issue that is not often discussed or researched in the literature, but could have a large influence upon how students engage with norms, ideas, and the institution itself.

The adventure curriculum, with its active and engaging pedagogy, may be well suited to the curricular goals of a college's First Year Experience program. As academics point to trends in students becoming increasingly disengaged more powerful and intense engagement experiences may be necessary if students are to receive the maximum social and educational benefits from college.

Success with Parent Education: Dialoguing at the Collegiate Level

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At University College with the University of Oklahoma, we decided to modify our interactions with parents not only to develop appropriate involvement at the collegiate level but to acknowledge parental importance in the lives of their students. Because of these modifications, there has been a positive difference in the overall contact after student entry into the institution.

This presentation will discuss the current practices and effective techniques used to teach the new college parent and student about their changing roles. By setting the stage of education, vocabulary and dialogue, both parents and students can make the successful transition within the appropriate boundaries. This information can be applied at any institution.

This presentation will explore:

- the importance of educating parents and students about their new roles
- how to use a different “vocabulary” when speaking with parents
- techniques to help parents understand boundaries and expectations
- how to take effective control in your office with students and their parents
- ideas to assist students in becoming more proactive
- practical information that will assist with future involvement

This presentation has been awarded Best in State, Best in Region, and was invited to present as a national Webinar through the National Academic Advising Association.

Ready, Set; FLY [First Learning Year]: A Causal Model for Risk at the University of Pretoria.

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Prospective first year students are usually very eager to spread their wings and explore their new learning environment. There are however many factors that predispose first year students to risk, especially in the South African context. “Risk” in this context refers to students who are at risk for failure or voluntary withdrawal. In South Africa a great cause for concern is the low participation rates, especially from the majority of the population and the low graduation rates of students who are in the system. The cause of this reality relates to more than just a lack of academic ability. The purpose of the study is therefore to identify the non-cognitive entry characteristics of first year students as they relate to academic performance and withdrawal. A questionnaire, the ‘Academic Readiness Questionnaire’ (ARQ) was developed and pilot tested in 2007 for this purpose and consists of 70 questions and is answered on a five point Likert-type scale. Various retention models (e.g. Tinto, 1993; Bean & Eaton, 2004) and questionnaires (e.g. Non-Cognitive Questionnaire of Tracey & Sedlacek, 1989, 2004) were used during the development of the questionnaire. The ARQ was administered to first year students from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences during the orientation week (first week in February 2008). A total of 963 questionnaires were used during the data analysis phase. A causal model, based on logistic regression analysis of the questionnaire and biographical information from the students data-base will be developed to profile students at risk for failure or withdrawal as part of an ‘Early Warning, Tracking and Referral System’. Exit interviews were also conducted to provide qualitative information regarding the reasons behind, and predisposing factors affecting student withdrawals at first year level. Triangulation of the findings helps to test and develop retention theory in a South African context.

The start of something great: Designing peer mentoring programs to build a sense of connection between students

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The first year experience of students in higher education is well recognized as being critical to retention, success and student satisfaction. Peer mentoring programs are often implemented to assist with the successful transition of first year students to university. The Business Mates peer mentoring program was set up in 2007 following results from a university student experience survey indicating that students had low scores on sense of community and interaction with other students. This was also evident in an Australia-wide study (Australasian Survey of Student Engagement - AUSSE) into the first year experience, with first years indicating lower scores on areas of engagement than first year students in the United States (National Survey of Student Engagement - NSSE).

This area of students’ sense of community and interaction between students has been the focus of first year initiatives at the University of South Australia. Thus, the peer mentoring program was designed to focus on structured social interaction and integration of international and local students through the peer mentors working in a pair. Following implementation of the program the evaluation results indicated that there was an increase in both first year students and the peer mentors sense of community and interaction with other students.

Filmed footage will be shown highlighting the social aspects of the peer mentoring program. An important part of this session will be the audience sharing experiences of how other universities have built effective peer mentoring programs and the strategies implemented to increase the level of interaction and sense of community amongst students.

International Higher Education Session

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Summary: None

Primer for First-Time Attendees

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Summary: None

Is it Possible to Sustain Individual Spirituality, Authenticity, Wholeness, and Self-Renewal in the Academy Today?

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Summary: None

Pre- and Initial Entry Support and Development Program for First-Year Students: A South African Perspective

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The presentation will be divided into three (3) parts:

Part 1 will be a diagrammatic presentation and brief explanation of a theory called "Circles of Progression". This theory consists of four circles portraying the social and academic progression of a university student. Each of these circles consists of concepts which represent variables whose interaction constitute the essence of the theory.

Part 2 will elaborate on the first two circles of the theory, namely the Pre-entry and Initial stages of progression. These are regarded as the critical stages in the social and academic integration of a non-traditional first year student. Specific factors affecting the progression of the student from one circle to the other will be discussed, thus showing how each of these factors affects their academic performance. These are believed to be the factors that should be considered in order to design specific support and development strategies and interventions during these two stages of progression. These strategies and interventions can reduce the 40% drop out rate of first year students in South African higher education institutions.

Part 3 will be a diagrammatic presentation and explanation of an integrated and holistic programme that can be used to support and develop non-traditional undergraduate students.

A Community Welcome: The Mountains Ocean Valley Experience (MOVE)

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In 2007-08, 100 freshmen students at the University of the Pacific participated in a new and unique outdoor experiential program. This program was initiated by the First Year Experience Committee as a complement to the curricular common experience provided in Pacific Seminars. Thirty faculty, staff, and student leaders served as program facilitators. The program was designed to introduce students to personal and social responsibility concepts within the context of environmental stewardship. In addition, students learned about John Muir and his special connection to Pacific.

Since that time the program has grown and in 2009-2010 will include seven regional locations, over 100 faculty and staff, and the entire incoming first year and transfer classes. The program is now referred to as MOVE (Mountains Oceans Valley Experience) and is considered a part of the orientation experience for all new Pacific students. More detail about this program can be found at: www.pacificmove.org. Assessment findings to date indicate that students meet the expected learning outcomes associated with the program and also experience outcomes associated with increase confidence in their role as students, increased involvement in campus life, and increased persistence.

This session will describe the design and implementation of the MOVE experience, including how the program has been institutionalized and funded. Session participants will learn about:

- Literature documenting the impact of common experiences in the transition of new students
- How university-wide collaboration has been cultivated in support of this program
- The perspectives of program partners, including faculty, staff, and students
- Program design, including development of common learning outcomes and cross-location shared experiences
- Assessment results and responding program enhancements to date
- Program materials and resources that may be revised for participants' own use
- Opportunity for discussion/evaluation of materials for application at participant institutions

Historical Perspectives on Student Engagement: Are Millennial Students More Engaged Than Their Boomer Parents?

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First-year experience programs are designed to promote both academic success and student engagement. According to generational theorists, the interests and experiences of incoming students have fluctuated over time, with Millennial students being more engaged and accomplished than their predecessors. However, research in this area has failed to document how high school engagement activities and out-of-class accomplishments have changed over the years. This project attempts to fill this void by informing professionals about the changing nature of engagement and accomplishments of incoming students.

Data for this project encompasses 34 years of Student Profile Section records from the ACT College Entrance Exam. Forty million student records were available during this time period. We randomly sampled 10% of complete records for each study year. The profile section contains 190 questions, of which 79 yes/no questions relate directly to a broad range of high school extracurricular activities (e.g., instrumental music, vocal music, student government, etc.) and out-of-class accomplishments (e.g., leadership, music, speech, art, writing, science, athletics, community service, and work experience). In addition, individuals self-report a number of sociodemographic variables. The data for this project is analyzed using both visual and statistical methods. Visual inspection allows for general information and guidance for proper statistical analyses. All statistical analyses utilize tests for random effects, given that examinees are nested in states. Final results are discussed in comparison to the theory by Strauss and Howe, detailing the nature of generations over time.

Findings from this project will inform professionals about engagement and accomplishments of college bound students prior to entering college. This trend analysis provides depth to institutional understanding of first-year students' needs, allowing first-year program professionals to better meet those needs. Additionally, the findings provide data to support and challenge existing theories regarding incoming student characteristics.

Increasing Accessibility: Lessons Learned in Retaining Special Population Students

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Access to and success in post-secondary education has become an important public issue throughout North America. Although 4 out of 5 Canadians take some PSE by their mid-20's, 1

in 7 drop out (Statistics Canada, 2007). Attrition for under-represented groups--those students who make up our recent and planned growth--is even higher. Holistic retention programs and planning are not well-developed at most institutions.

In recent years, there has been considerable attention paid to institutional branding, student recruitment and strategic outreach to targeted groups. Separately, the teaching/learning and student affairs communities have concentrated on student engagement, first-year seminars and supplemental instruction. By using the strategic enrolment management conceptual framework to connect these approaches, we offer a way forward to improve institutional effectiveness as it relates to the success of special population students.

Beginning with a description of the political and economic context faced by Aboriginal Canadians, low-income and first generation students, we use an evidence-based approach to examine both the barriers to access as well as the factors associated with attrition. Subsequently, we will present the five key lessons learned in recruiting and retaining these students.

We conclude our presentation with a review of some of the best Canadian practices affecting special population student success, including: academic programs, academic preparation, academic support programs, bridging and transition programs, community partnerships, community outreach, educational centres/communities, financial aid, and supportive campus environment initiatives.

The Role of Undergraduate Research in the First-Year Experience

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First year students who participate in the Undergraduate Research Scholars program show improved academic performance as well as improved retention rates over their first year peers, and this trend persists to their junior year as well.

The results are particularly remarkable for academically under-prepared groups of students. They suggest that fostering community and appreciating diversity while engaging in inquiry-based learning under a direct guidance of a faculty mentor is particularly beneficial to early undergraduates. Our data suggest that the research component is a valuable addition to students' academic success during the time when they are fulfilling their general education requirements and as such should be considered as a significant addition to students. The goal of this discussion is to identify particular learning outcomes related to students' involvement in research early in their undergraduate experience.

Surviving the Global Financial Crisis (GFC): Maximize Your Employability Through PASS!

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Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) is based on Supplemental Instruction (SI) as developed by the University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC). The presenter will outline the implementation and expansion of PASS at the University of Wollongong (UOW) over an 8 year period. From 1 partner faculty and 6 Peer Leaders in 2002, the Program now has nearly 60 Peer Leaders who support over 2,500 participants per semester across all nine faculties. PASS is the cornerstone of the FYE at UOW.

Given the global economic crisis and uncertain job prospects, the development of students' personal and professional skills, in addition to their educational qualifications, is critical. SI / PASS promotes the development of outstanding graduate qualities in both participants and Peer Leaders. The presenter will focus on these qualities and the enhancement of leadership, communication and teamwork skills in the Peer Leaders to demonstrate how students, through peer learning programs, can maximize their skills and enhance their employability. Out of the thousands of PASS participants at UOW, several hundred have progressed to be UOW PASS Peer Leaders. Over many years, these Peer Leaders have either been employed by the top graduate employers in Australia or gone on to study a Masters or PhD. Through its role as National PASS Centre, UOW has implemented a National PASS Peer Leader Forum and Awards. These have been designed to further develop, promote and recognize the outstanding qualities of the PASS Peer Leaders and disseminate best practice throughout the region. These initiatives will also be detailed by the presenter.

The SciTech model: From First Year to Career

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The SciTech (science and technology) model is based on a number of key concepts and aims to counteract dropout and improve student progress towards a degree. These include personal contact, access to information, and an understanding of academic life. Personal contact between new students and staff is crucial, and a personal touch has also been given to all information material including our web site. During their first term, students often experience information overload so we always strive to provide necessary and correct information when needed. Our students come from all over Sweden, and for many of them, this is their first time away from home. Therefore, we highly prioritize an introduction to academic life. In addition, we regularly monitor our students' progress in order to discover and counteract problems at an early stage.

Our first year activities include a one-week voluntary induction organized by the student union. Induction activities include guided tours in Uppsala and to the student clubs, social activities and refresher courses. In the week after induction, students fill out a questionnaire providing us with background information.

Academic counselors coach new students as well as support and introduce them into academic life. The coaches have group meetings with their students where the coach describes the study programme; highlights differences between lectures, seminars, and laboratory work; reviews

rules and regulations; and discusses practical issues.

This period is followed by a course in study skills integrated into a core science, math, or technology course that the coach teaches in cooperation with regular lecturers in order to maintain contact with students.

A peer support programme, START, is offered during the autumn term to facilitate social and academic integration. In this programme, a group of new students meets with a second-year student for study sessions or to talk about academic issues.

Creating a Supportive Environment for First-Year Students by Developing a One-Stop Shop

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Students are often required to stand in multiple long lines to transact the business of admissions, registration, records, financial aid, parking, and cashiering. Providing a One Stop where admissions' advisors are cross trained in multiple areas allows for a much higher level of service to first-year students. Students are able to talk to one admission advisor regarding multiple areas in order to get their questions answered at the same time--rather than going from department to department. This presentation will discuss how Utah Valley University was able to design and implement a One Stop in an effort to create a higher level of service and support for first year students. The challenges and benefits of creating this service will be explored along with pitfalls to avoid. The creation of a culture that promotes high levels of service and support is critical in developing a successful One Stop. Ideas and strategies of how to implement this service on other campuses will be highlighted. An invitation to visit Utah Valley University will be extended.

Critical Thinking as the Cornerstone of First-Year Seminar Curriculum

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This poster will present the results of assessment data gathered over the last two years by FYE faculty at Western Kentucky University. This data was collected to evaluate whether students demonstrated any improvement in their critical thinking ability as a result of significant curricular changes that were implemented in 2007. The first year experience course was substantively revised over the spring and summer of 2007 and a new course was offered in the fall that emphasized developing critical thinking skills by systematically employing a model

that was developed by the Foundation for Critical Thinking in Dillon, California. Based on input from faculty and students, this curriculum was slightly revised in the fall of 2008 and was assessed again to measure its effectiveness.

The overall goals of this revision were to improve students' thinking abilities, to provide more consistency across more than 100 sections of the course, and to increase faculty and administrative support for the FYE program in general. The focus on critical thinking was in direct response to a 2006 survey of non- FYE faculty that indicated that the most important thing they want first year students to develop is their critical thinking ability.

This poster will provide an overview of the steps involved in this revision, including creating a new text, new common assignments, new faculty development workshops and materials, and assessment instruments to measure our learning outcomes. It will also provide the results of two years of assessment data gathered from more than 400 students representing both general, college, and department- based first year experience courses.

The Next Chapter: Evolution and Assessment of a Summer Reading Program for First-Year Students

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“The Next Chapter” is Westminster College’s common summer reading experience for all incoming first-year students. This primal component of the curriculum was initiated ten years ago through collaborative efforts of the Office of Student Affairs and the First-Year Program. Over time, the summer reading program has undergone changes in response to considered experience and new initiatives. This presentation will provide an overview of the history and functional evolution of the program.

The presentation will also focus on the intent, objectives and outcomes of “The Next Chapter”. The place of the summer reading in the first year curriculum, including integration of the experience into Westminster’s first-year course, “Introduction to a Liberal Arts Education” will be described. The process of selecting the common summer reading, the development of ancillary resources, and the role of the summer reading in new student orientation will also be examined.

Another major emphasis of the presentation will center on assessing Westminster's summer reading program. In particular, varied efforts to evaluate the program in view of established outcomes will be described. Data from several years of assessment into questions ranging from student engagement with the reading to contributions of the program in promoting learning communities will be discussed.

The presentation will offer a window into Westminster College's experience with a common summer reading for first-year students that may be useful or of interest to those at other institutions. Given the popularity of summer reading programs, we expect to engage those attending the session in fruitful discussion and sharing of ideas and practices.

Assessing Student Perspectives of a First-Semester Liberal Education Course

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This poster will detail the design and results of an assessment program examining student reactions to, and perspectives on, a required first-semester course - "Introduction to a Liberal Arts Education". The end-of-semester survey-based evaluation focuses on student experiences of the course in relation to established course objectives, curriculum and outcomes. Data from three years of assessment will be presented and use of results in assessing and revising the course will be discussed.

The Wright State Model for Engineering Mathematics Education: Increasing First-Year Student Retention, Motivation, and Success in Engineering

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The inability of incoming students to advance past the traditional first-year calculus sequence is a primary cause of attrition in engineering programs across the country. As a result, this session will describe an NSF funded initiative at Wright State University to redefine the way engineering mathematics is taught, with the goal of increasing student retention, motivation and success in engineering. The WSU approach begins with the development of a novel first-year engineering mathematics course, EGR 101 "Introductory Mathematics for Engineering Applications." Taught by engineering faculty, the course includes lecture, laboratory and recitation components. Using an application-oriented, hands-on approach, the course addresses only the salient math topics actually used in core engineering courses. These include the traditional physics, engineering mechanics, electric circuits and computer programming sequences. The EGR 101 course replaces traditional math prerequisite requirements for the above core courses, so that students can advance in the curriculum without having completed a traditional first-year calculus sequence. The WSU model concludes with a revised engineering math sequence, taught by the math department later in the curriculum, in concert with accreditation requirements. The result has shifted the traditional emphasis on math prerequisite requirements to an emphasis on engineering motivation for math, with a "just-in-time" structuring of the new math sequence. This session will provide an overview of the WSU model for engineering mathematics education, followed by an assessment of student performance, perception and retention through its initial implementation. It will also summarize the scope of our recent NSF CCLI Phase 3 and STEP Type 1 awards, which include pilot adoption and assessment by a total of 16 institutions across the USA. The presentation will include significant updates since the approach was last reported, including the introduction and assessment of EGR 100 as a precursor to EGR 101 for initially underprepared students.

"Says Who?": Academic Integrity and the First-Year Experience

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Understanding the importance of and strategies for maintaining a high standard of academic integrity in university scholarship is often a daunting prospect for first year students. Faculty, librarians, university administrators, teaching assistants and peer mentors face many challenges when explaining the pedagogical importance of academic integrity to first year students and when encountering breeches of academic integrity. It is often when students write their first paper that challenges with the transition to university writing and referencing becomes evident, especially in relation to academic integrity. Many first year students struggle with the unexpected requirements of properly citing sources, using different bibliographic styles, paraphrasing properly, as well as expressing concepts and ideas in their own words. Confusion and conflict may also arise with respect to group work and acceptable levels of collaboration on assignments. Invigilators face their own set of academic integrity issues associated with tests and exams.

This roundtable will explore current and future issues, trends, and best practices associated with fostering academic integrity in the first year. It will also explore strategies to facilitate the integration of academic integrity into student learning and scholarship. Facilitators will consider a pedagogical approach to academic integrity that treats it as a complex multidimensional issue, and which includes information literacy, ethics, academic integrity tutorials, quizzes, and various online resources. The group will explore the value of having unified, multilevel and integrated approaches that are “pan university/college”. Finally, group members will be encouraged to explore the role of technology both in promoting academic integrity and in facilitating academic dishonesty (i.e., through on-line essay mills and other similar services).

Overall, the purpose of this roundtable is to explore challenges and solutions associated with integrating academic integrity into the first year experience, and to encourage the development of new and innovative strategies to address this crucial element of successful scholarship and a

crucial element of University life.

Critical Thinking as Part of the First-Year Experience Curriculum

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Critical thinking is an important university skill that should be a standard expected learning outcome of FYE courses. Often students enter post secondary educational institutions with poorly developed or limited ability in critical thinking and analysis. They struggle with acquiring a deeper understanding and analyzing issues in their courses. Current literature suggests that students must acquire various critical thinking skills to succeed at the University level; those who acquire critical thinking and related academic skills are more likely to successfully complete their degrees. Teaching first year students to become critical thinkers requires a comprehensive educational approach, with the evaluation process playing a vital role in “critical thinking pedagogy”.

This roundtable will examine the relevant pedagogical theory, research, and “best practices” for teaching critical thinking. Participants will be encouraged to share their own experiences in this area, and to brainstorm together to develop novel and innovative approaches to addressing this need. The session will be designed to assist those teaching first year experience seminars and other first year courses by discussing appropriate activities to encourage and assess critical thinking, the successful implementation of criteria in order to evaluate student progress, and the creation of a classroom environment in which application of critical thinking is embraced as a tool for learning. If time permits, the session will also explore more general strategies for faculty, librarians, university administrators, teaching assistants, and peer advisors to promote

critical thinking amongst first year students.

Overall, the purpose of this roundtable is to move toward understanding the challenges and developing and sharing solutions for developing critical thinking and related skills in first year students.

Engagement and Success: The First Year Experience at York University

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This session will be based on our first year academic initiatives that are intended to facilitate the transition from secondary school to York University. We will be highlighting our Academic Orientation, Critical Skills Sessions, and initiatives designed to help students succeed in their first year at York University. Our overall first year program will be discussed as well as the survey results over a six year period regarding first year Academic Orientations for students entering our university during our fall and winter terms. We will be discussing our successes and challenges for ensuring students do well at York.

We will be discussing our Academic Orientation survey results and how important it is for students to understand academic expectations in academic orientation of peer advisors as part of academic orientation, critical skills and other aspects of the orientation. There are overwhelming survey responses that indicate a high comfort with the university as a result of attending Academic Orientation. We will also discuss how we did a post-orientation evaluation and survey four months after Academic Orientation to see how it helped students with the transition to university. This research is based on surveying 120 students at the time of the

summer Academic Orientation and doing a follow up survey with 47 students four months later in the middle of the academic year.

In short, this poster session will offer those visiting our presentation an opportunity to see what we are doing for first year students at York University. There will be a presentation of our survey instrument and results as well as an opportunity to discuss them.