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Money Matter\$: Promoting Access and Success Through Financial Literacy for First-Year Students

Research (e.g., Public Agenda, 2009) has shown that students are more likely to drop out of school because of outside pressures (e.g., finances and employment pressures) than from poor grades. Many students lack the education and experience of budgeting their money, time, and resources. Consequently, they may make uninformed or careless decisions that further exacerbate their monetary problems, beginning a domino effect of increasing debt. Parents are often unable to help financially or have not properly evaluated their student's needs regarding financial support for education and living expenses. Also, students may hide their financial situations from their parents until it is too late, which creates added pressure on both parents and students.

Student withdrawals can impact every department across campus through lost tuition revenue and to lost philanthropic support from future alumni. Even students who persist to graduation may leave with unmanageable levels of debt, limiting their ability to invest in their alma mater. Acknowledging that a correlation exists between financial literacy skills and academic success, retention, persistence, and alumni support, the University of North Texas (UNT) established the Student Money Management Center (SMMC) in the fall of 2005 as an extension of the array of student services administered by the Division of Student Development. SMMC teaches students how to be financially responsible citizens equipped with money management skills that will enable them to achieve their financial goals now and as they transition from today's students to tomorrow's professionals.

UNT students are both traditional and nontraditional and represent a wide variety of multicultural groups. To better accommodate this diversity, SMMC actively sought out the advice and recommendations of student focus groups as it developed programs and the organizational structure. Today, the Center's team of four professionals, three peer mentors, and two student workers is serving approximately 8,000 students annually. In addition to free educational workshops and online resources, the Center provides unlimited, confidential individual money management, debt aversion, and personal financial assessment consultations at no cost to students. The SMMC also administers two hardship loan programs.

The innovative array of services for all students includes:

- **Information through interactive online resources.** The Center's web site (<http://moneymanagement.unt.edu>) offers students 24/7 access to money management articles, free downloadable personal financial management resources, a training calendar, links to important external

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web sites, and other resources. The site also provides students the opportunity to submit questions to SMMC staff and to schedule appointments for consultations.

- **Education through the Smart Money workshop series.** Each semester, SMMC sponsors 20-30 workshops addressing money management issues for college students. Workshops are based on students' questions, recommendations, or suggestions and are designed to provide students with information and tools that they can easily personalize and apply to their own financial lives.
- **Application through individualized confidential counseling sessions.** Students have unlimited access to confidential personal financial management consultations with either a professional staff member or peer mentor. Consultations provide students with insight and clarity in all aspects of their personal financial situation and money management issues and commitments.
- **Retention through the Student-to-Student Financial Success Program (S2S) and SMMC loan programs.** The S2S program uses trained peer Money Management Mentors and a student-centered, student-driven service model to teach basic money management skills. The three SMMC loan programs offer students, who meet eligibility requirements the opportunity to apply for additional funds they may need to address unanticipated or emergency-related expenses (e.g., unexpected or underestimated textbook, course material, rent, or utility costs) immediately threatening their enrollment. These loan programs are separate from other loan programs administered by the University's financial aid and student accounting offices.

Since opening the Center's doors, 23,393 students have attended SMMC workshops, presentations, and resource fairs; 5,284 students facing desperate financial situations remained enrolled due to receiving \$3.9 million in SMMC-administered loans through UNT funds in a dedicated loan account; and 1,094 students partnered with Center staff to strategize repayment options and commitments for approximately \$9 million in student loan and personal debt obligations. In addition, 2,603 parents learned about SMMC programs and services during workshops and presentations. Most importantly, these parents learned how they can work with their sons or daughters to better prepare them for the financial responsibilities they will face as incoming first-year students.

The positive impact of the UNT Student Money Management Center's services and programs can be summed up with two words: student success. Students who use SMMC services walk away with a greater knowledge of managing their personal finances and financial obligations with increased confidence, and greater insight into themselves and what they are capable of achieving as informed and responsible adults. The program's success is evidenced by the following personal testimonials from several first-year students:

I downloaded a couple of the worksheets and scheduled a consultation with a peer mentor. I now have a personalized college financial plan and a strategy for purchasing a car next year.

I knew how important budgeting my money was, but I didn't know where to begin. The mentors gave me some great advice and a sample budget worksheet anyone could use and follow. Thanks!

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Without adequate financial literacy educational opportunities during their college experience, students may fail to comprehend that poor personal financial decisions made today can negatively impact their lives for years to come.



The Big Picture

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Peer Leadership: Definition, Description, and Classification

The positive impact of peer influence on student development is perhaps best documented by Astin's (1993) longitudinal study of a national sample of some 500,000 students and 1,300 institutions of all types, involving 192 measures of undergraduate students' college experiences. This 25-year, multi-institutional study tracked student change between college admission and graduation via multiple follow-up measures of development (e.g., intellectual, emotional, attitudinal, social), using sophisticated research methods (i.e., multivariate analyses) that allowed conclusions to be drawn about the direct and indirect effects of the college experience on student outcomes. Reflecting on the results of this study, Astin states:

Viewed as a whole, the many empirical findings from this study seem to warrant the following general conclusion: the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years. (p. 398)

Use of peers to assist and promote student development is steadily growing. In a very early study of peer support on college campuses, Powell (1959) found that peers served primarily in new student orientation and residence halls. Twenty-five years later, Ender (1984) reported expanded use of peers in other settings, such as judiciary programs, student activities, advising, counseling, study skills, and crisis intervention. A national survey conducted by Carns, Carns, and Wright (1993) revealed a further increase in the number of campuses using peer-support agents. The upward trend appears to be continuing, as witnessed by the large number of recent, peer-related presentations being delivered at first-year experience conferences and articles appearing in higher education publications.

The increased use of peer facilitators has been accompanied by a growing number of terms used to describe who they are and their duties. They have been referred to as *peer leaders* (Hamid, 2001), *peer educators* (Ender & Newton, 2000), and *peer mentors* (Rice & Brown, 1990). Given the expanding use of peers as support agents in higher education and the variety of terms used to describe them, it may now be time to discuss a more consistent nomenclature to describe their purpose and a meaningful typology for organizing or classifying their diverse roles.

Proposing a Comprehensive Descriptor

The terms *leader*, *educator*, and *mentor* have been used most frequently as comprehensive descriptors for the variety of peer-support roles. The peer educator title has a narrower connotation that appears to capture forms of leadership that are tied

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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS *Peer Educator Programs*

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition maintains a collection of research-based descriptions of peer educator programs on our web site. Five cases are presented from a range of different educational institutions using peer educators in a variety of different settings—first-year seminars, diversity education, orientation, support programs for at-risk students, and Supplemental Instruction.

We invite you to help us expand the available resources on peer educators by including a description of your initiative in this online collection. If your institution has an assessed peer educator program that has a history of two years or more, we encourage you to submit a description of your program for consideration. We are interested in the objectives and structure of the program, how it has been assessed, what was learned, and how the assessment results have been used to improve the service provided to new students. The peer educator program collection and guidelines for those who would like to submit an initiative for publication can be found at www.sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr/peers.html

more closely to teaching functions and academic development (e.g., peer tutor or Supplemental Instruction leader). The peer mentor designation has been defined as a form of peer leadership that is more personal in nature, involving support and guidance that goes beyond academic development to address other elements of the whole person (Gould & Lomax, 1993; Harmon, 2006; Sanft, Jensen, & McMurray, 2008). The term can be traced to Homer's *Odyssey*, an epic poem in which King Odysseus was away from home for many years fighting in the Trojan War and left his son to his most trusted friend and advisor—a gentleman by the name of Mentor. Thus, the meaning of mentoring is rooted in a close, ongoing, one-to-one relationship. In one of the earliest definitions of mentoring to appear in the student development literature, Lester and Johnson (1981) define it as a “one-to-one learning relationship between an older person and a younger person that is based on extended dialogue between them. [It is] a way of individualizing a student’s education” (p. 50). Thus, peer mentoring may be viewed as a more intensive, personalized form of peer leadership that occurs over an extended period of time.

Of the three terms, peer leader has the broadest meaning and appears to be the best candidate for providing a comprehensive descriptor. There is strong consensus in the scholarly literature that leadership involves promoting positive and ethical change (HERI, 1996; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2008), whether that change is promoted in an individual, group, organization, or community (Conner, 1992). Peer leadership also accurately captures an oft-cited goal in campus mission statements: student leadership development and the preparation of future leaders.

A Proposed Typology of Peer-Leadership Contexts

Research and theory suggest that effective leadership involves awareness of specific roles and the particular context or situation in which leadership takes place (Blanchard, 1991; Komives, et al., 2007). However, little systematic discussion of key distinctions between different leadership roles and contexts has taken place (Benjamin, 2001; Harmon, 2006).

If peer leadership is adopted as a comprehensive descriptor, then peers may be said to provide leadership in the following variety of contexts—ranging from micro to macro:

- **Individual**—promoting positive personal change or individual empowerment (e.g., as a peer tutor or peer counselor)
- **Group**—promoting collective change or empowering others (e.g., as an orientation group leader or a peer co-instructor for a first-year seminar course)
- **Organization**—promoting change in campus policies, programs, practices, or procedures (e.g., a student government officer or club president)
- **Community**—civic leadership or political change at a larger societal level (e.g., student service leadership in the local or regional community or at the national level)

A Proposed Typology of Peer-Leadership Roles

Within each of the foregoing leadership contexts, peers may assume one or more of the following leadership roles:

- **Role model**—leading by example (i.e., displaying exemplary behavior)
- **Personal support agent**—helping others identify and resolve personal problems
- **Resource-and-Referral agent**—knowing when and how to connect students with key support services and resources

Use of peers
to assist and
promote student
development is
steadily growing.

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- **Academic-success or learning coach**—empowering students specifically for academic success by supplying or modeling learning strategies
- **College-success or life-success coach**—empowering students' overall success in college and life by supplying or modeling personal (holistic) development strategies.

Conclusion

This article proposes that peer leadership serve a comprehensive descriptor and offers a typology for classifying peer-leadership contexts and peer-leadership roles. In the next issue of *E-Source*, this column will examine specific positions occupied by peer leaders in higher education and will explore generic (thematic) principles of effective leadership that permeate all leadership positions.

HOME

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I contacted the Center for help [father lost job]. Through several consultations, I now know how to make my financial aid refund last from disbursement to disbursement. The counselor also hooked me up with the Career Center. I'm hoping to find an on-campus job real soon.

The program's success has also been measured through enrollment and academic data compiled in 2009 from all students who received individualized consultations: 80.3% continued their academic progress compared to UNT's overall first-to-second-year retention rate of 76%. In addition, 48% of this group had GPAs greater than 3.0 versus the institutional mean of 2.78, and 85.1% maintained GPAs greater than 2.0. Further, positive behavioral changes were noted in these students with 31.2% scheduling and attending follow-up consultations, and 83.4% completing tasks from their consultation action plans by the deadlines they set for themselves.

College students will continue to be confronted with both a newfound independence and the financial concerns inherent with living away from home for the first time in their lives. Without adequate financial literacy educational opportunities during their college experience, students may fail to comprehend that poor personal financial decisions made today can negatively impact their lives for years to come. College campuses are poised to break the cycle of fear and stress many students experience when confronted with the responsibility of managing their own finances. This stress is compounded by the stress of academic success expectations and career development activities.

Since its inception, the SMMC team has been sought out by nearly 100 other campuses, including technical, community colleges, and four-year universities, as they began to explore, research, and develop financial literacy programming tailored to meet the needs and concerns of their diverse student bodies. The keys to the Center's success include (a) one-point service entry for students, (b) education on key money management concepts and life skills, (c) power of personalization and customization through the use of technology, (d) innovative customer service practices, (e) holistic student development, (f) lifelong learning, and (g) responsible citizenship. The University of North Texas Student Money Management Center welcomes the interest and opportunity to share its experiences and expertise with other campuses.

HOME

Contact

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Enabling First-Year Students to Achieve Academic and Social Goals Through a Project-Based Course

Project-based learning is an instructional approach requiring students to answer and reflect on questions or problems using real-world activities, products, or tasks. Generally involving group collaboration on a common goal, students are evaluated individually based on communication, presentation, time management, and teamwork skills; personal reflection; and the quality of the final product. To compare the effectiveness of a project-based teaching model with a more traditional lecture-based pedagogy, a project-based course was developed by two instructors for Elmhurst College's first-year seminar initiative.

Elmhurst's first-year seminar (FYS) program was piloted in 2007 to enhance the academic success of first-year students and increase institutional engagement. Beginning with four, optional, one-credit courses, each cotaught by faculty and a student affairs staff member, 63 students enrolled in the pilot. By 2009, the program became a requirement for the entire incoming cohort (i.e., 577 students) and expanded to 32 sections. All seminars are themed-based (e.g., Cultural Definition of Intelligence; Debunking Health Frauds; Facebook, iPods, and Identity; Art and Activism) with common elements, including joint sessions on academic honesty and information literacy, a joint discussion of liberal education, a common reading book, and a service-learning project. After completing the seminar, students are expected to be able to (a) demonstrate an understanding of the value of a liberal arts education and its synergy with professional preparation; (b) react ethically to varied perspectives and experiences to stimulate intellectual curiosity and to expand cultural awareness; (c) articulate ways to ethically gather, synthesize, and present information in school, work, and life; (d) respond critically to varied texts from different disciplinary spheres of knowledge and perspectives; and (e) contribute to the campus and society through varied means, including

See PROJECT-BASED COURSE, p. 7



Class having fun on an energy project. (Used with permission of the author)

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“Not only has our FYS taught us how to think critically, question what we are told, and want to make a difference in our world but we have each made several close friends in the process.” (Student comment)

civic engagement. The majority of sections use traditional pedagogical methods, including lecture-based formats.

The project-based seminar, Local Choices: Global Effects (LCGE), focused on sustainability issues. Nation (2008) examined the use of a project-based format for teaching sustainability topics in a geography course and noted that the “emphasis on learning-by-doing and problem-solving allows students to untangle the complex web of issues surrounding sustainability... problem-solving and ‘use-inspired research’ are central to the sustainability enterprise” (p. 109). This model not only provided a good fit for the seminar’s sustainability topic but also facilitated the instructors’ interest in designing a course that redirected traditional pedagogy to one where students took control of their own learning and that of their peers. In addition, the instructors believed a project-based teaching style could more effectively engage and develop students’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills by applying classroom knowledge to real-world situations.

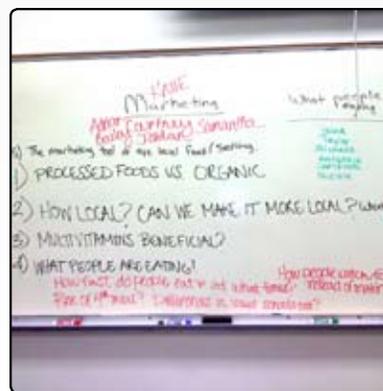
The seminar focused on three topics: (a) energy consumption and alternate energy sources, (b) food production and consumption, and (c) waste management. Students worked on each topic for a month. They identified and chose specific projects in each subject area; selected their research teams; and worked with the instructors on the research design, analysis, and presentation. Student projects included (a) a study of the energy consumption of devices operating in sleep or silent mode; (b) a program to detect and educate the consumer about *greenwashing*—the practice of giving misleading or false information about the environmental sustainability of products; (c) a waste audit of the College with recommendations on how to achieve a zero waste goal; and (d) a collaboration with the College’s cafeterias to source more locally-grown food and implement campus marketing to adopt environmentally-friendly dining ware. Class meetings involved lectures coupled with teams sharing information. Students incorporated aspects of other disciplines including economics, physical sciences, political science, and business in analyzing the impact of their daily decisions and choices related to their topics. Relevant and interesting guest speakers and field trips were also integrated into the course.

At the end of each project, students made a presentation summarizing their research, analysis, changes in their lives, and recommendations to the College and community. In addition, students wrote individual papers for each project describing their contributions and their learning experiences. Students also completed a comprehensive paper reflecting on the seminar and their progress toward the FYS goals and took an electronic, short-answer final exam.

The course was assessed through multiple instruments. These included the FYS program evaluation questionnaire; an LCGE course mixed-methods feedback survey; and student output, including reflection papers and project contributions. The FYS program questionnaire consisted of more than 30 questions using a five-point Likert scale that covered student orientation and the FYS course. As shown in Table 1, ratings for the LCGE course generally exceeded the aggregate ratings for all the FYS courses combined on questions that covered (a) academic rigor, (b) the link between liberal arts and professional preparation, (c) the level of engagement on and off campus, (d) interest in addressing national or global inequalities, (e) the power of individual choice, (f) connection with Elmhurst College, and (g) influence on the student’s values and belief system.



Students visiting water purification and distribution plant. (Used with permission of the author)



Brainstorming project ideas. (Used with permission of the author)

Table 1
Summary of Student Responses on Select Items of FYS Evaluation Survey

	AY 2007		AY 2008		AY 2009	
	ALL FYS ¹	LCGE ²	ALL FYS	LCGE	ALL FYS	LCGE
Number of registered students	63	13	128	16	577	18
Number of students who completed the FYS Evaluation Survey	63	13	128	16	522	15
Survey item	Percent responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"					
College thus far has proven to be more academically rigorous than high school.	81%	77%	70%	75%	74%	80%
Having completed the First-Year Seminar, I believe the link between liberal arts education and professional preparation is essential to my success in college and beyond.	79%	100%	86%	94%	64%	67%
Because of FYS, I feel more engaged ON campus.	64%	85%	77%	81%	50%	73%
Because of FYS, I feel more engaged OFF campus.	54%	77%	38%	63%	24%	40%
FYS increased my interest in addressing national/global inequalities.	70%	85%	56%	56%	35%	53%
FYS increased my awareness of the power of individual choice in making a difference.	76%	92%	73%	63%	53%	87%
As a result of Big Questions and the First-Year Seminar, I feel connected to Elmhurst College faculty, staff, and to my peers. ³	NA	NA	76%	94%	66%	93%
I believe that my involvement in Big Questions and First-Year Seminar has influenced my values and belief system. ⁴	NA	NA	46%	56%	28%	40%

Note: Statistical significance was not determined because of the large difference in sample size; data thus provide suggestive rather than conclusive evidence.

¹ Students in the entire FYS.

² Students in the Local Choices Global Effects (LCGE) course.

^{3,4} These questions were not asked in 2007 and were added in 2008.

Qualitative data obtained from the LCGE survey also affirmed the course success as illustrated by the following student comments:

We were able to do our own research- This helped me to be more engaged.

By focusing on choices made on a local and global scale, I have been forced to re-examine my principles and discover my obligations to others regarding not only in sustainability, but in life. This type of learning is exactly what a liberal arts education is all about.

I first decided to take this class...because I wanted to be able to hold intelligent conversations with one of my good friends who was always talking about "organic food" and the like... I have learned so much from this course, that I can now have informed conversations not just with people who know a little bit about sustainability but also with those people who know a lot about sustainability and those who know very little about it.

It is crucial to be a problem-solver and a critical thinker when in the work force. And communication, in any setting is very important, whether it is communication between family members or coworkers.

Not only has our FYS taught us how to think critically, question what we are told, and want to make a difference in our world but we have each made several close friends in the process.

Anecdotal evidence also points to the success of the LCGE course and its far-reaching effects. Two former seminar students have explored the issue of sustainability further in other courses and are incorporating the topic into their majors. Another student who worked at a local park district effectively campaigned the district administration

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Three Strategies for Engaging Students in Large Classes*

While small classes may provide a more optimal environment to promote student engagement, large classes (e.g., 50 or more students) are a fact of life on most campuses, and research suggests that classroom size does not appear to be decreasing (National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). This article will explore three strategies that make the large classroom more engaging while maintaining the quality of the learning experience: (a) a fusion of oral and written assignments, (b) the course passport, and (c) the clicker system. Such protocols and strategies make for a positive interface between students, peers, and their instructors.

Fusing Communication Techniques

Requiring students to write and speak effectively are valued outcomes of a college education and are rooted in the academic tradition (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Synthesizing these two communication techniques into a single class assignment can have a synergistic effect on improving both writing and oral presentation skills. At various times throughout the semester, students can be assigned small-themed topics (e.g., commenting on a video or providing a rationale for their choice of major) and asked to respond to the topic in a one-page written assignment. On the day the assignment is due, students are randomly chosen to orally present their written critique. Depending on the nature of the assignment, presentations can vary from 10 to 20 minutes. The written piece is graded for grammar, organization, and quality of sentence structure. The oral presentation is evaluated for the clarity of expression, organizational flow, ability to maintain audience interest, use of a visual aid/s (which are discussed with students prior to presentations to make resources available), voice projection, eye contact, gestures, and preparation. A series of small papers increases the students' level of comfort with the task, builds on feedback from previous papers and presentations to continually hone writing and oral presentation skills, and allows for all students to have a chance to respond orally.

Course Passport

Students create a course passport by putting their names, pictures, majors, class standing, and what they want to gain from the class onto a 3x5-index card. Instructors use the cards as a memory guide for students' names to elicit greater engagement in class discussion by calling on students by name. In addition, the passports can be used to form discussion or activity groups and to tailor course content to the interests and needs students list on their cards. This simple strategy can provide a more personalized environment in the class showing students that the instructor cares about them as individuals. This in turn can facilitate improved instructor/student interactions and engagement both in and out of the classroom.

Clicker

A clicker is a small, relatively inexpensive (\$50.00-\$100.00) hand-held device that students can purchase directly or through course fees. Clickers have multiple uses, including tracking attendance and promoting classroom participation by allowing students to electronically (and anonymously) respond to questions posed by the instructor and having those answers immediately tabulated and displayed on a screen to the entire class. The immediate responses can promote continued and more in-depth discussion on a topic. In addition, pop quizzes can be administered with clickers with an instant return of grades and grading curve. Clickers have the potential to reduce attrition and the anxiety of in-class questions, uncover gaps in learning, support classroom discussion, and add variety and fun to a class. Though

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International Student Support and Information Exchange With Skype

Victoria University (VU) has multiple campuses in Melbourne, Australia, with off-shore sites in China, Malaysia, and Vietnam. VU students are geographically, socioeconomically, culturally, and linguistically diverse and are typically nontraditional students (e.g., mature, familiar with different educational systems) possessing varying degrees of the academic and learning skills required in a higher education environment. There are a variety of entry points into VU determined by prior formal and informal learning and English language ability. Hence, the diversity that makes VU unique and exciting also creates a challenge for providing student-centered academic support.

Academic language and learning (ALL) services (i.e., student academic support) are provided by a dedicated unit of lecturers and are multilayered and multipronged, including peer mentoring, web- and text-based resources (i.e., for students and faculty), e-mail consultations and communication, and face-to-face appointments. In addition, optional discipline-specific workshops are offered targeting students at critical transition and testing points during the semester.

VU students, wherever they are studying and at whatever level, are entitled to ALL assistance. Selecting the appropriate service varies from location to location and depends on the student's need, timetable, available technology, and the partnership arrangement with the offshore hosting universities. In 2004, Skype, a software application that allows users to make voice calls over the Internet through an audio only or audio/video format (i.e., with webcam hardware), was introduced to VU by a visiting Chinese scholar to communicate with her colleagues in China. This initial exposure prompted discussion among ALL staff of additional applications for Skype.

Since Skype software is free, as are calls made between computers (calls made to mobile phones or land lines may incur a fee), this application offered a cost-effective, efficient, and more personal means of providing consultation services to both offshore students and lecturers. Since 2006, Skype has been promoted during academic workshop presentations to lecturers and students involved in VU classes at offshore campuses in China, Malaysia, and Vietnam, although Chinese students and instructors are the primary Skypers due to greater cultural acceptance of and familiarity with technological tools.

Skyping, so far, has been used slightly more by offshore lecturers who teach VU's English programs or Bachelor of Business subjects than by students. Faculty questions focus on interpretations of assignment requirements and grading criteria, while students typically seek extra advising; tutoring support with an assignment; or assistance finding, using, and citing reference material. There have also been several instances of a group of students initiating and participating in a single Skype call. These students are often working together on a course project or live in the same residence hall and have multiple questions about the same class. Group Skypes can be both academically and linguistically developmental in that typically one student acts as the initial primary communicator (in English), with background discussion and prompts occurring in the students' primary language. However, as students become more comfortable with the communication exchange and because the ALL staff member can ask for input from the other individuals, group members will frequently begin to add to the discussion. A group Skype can last between 45-60 minutes and can be a very effective use of staff time in providing

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academic support to more students. ALL staff are currently processing approximately 45 hours of Skype calls per semester from lecturers and students.

Skype is not without its technical and logistical challenges. Occasional unnatural time delay between video and audio, fuzzy audio connections, time zone differences, language and cultural barriers, proper etiquette issues, and ensuring both computers are in active status for a call are just some of the issues that have been encountered. However, most of these issues can easily be addressed through rebooting or a clear communication exchange about when to initiate calls and how to use features.

Victoria University will continue to offer Skype as an ALL service. It is an inexpensive tool that provides a personal touch to learning and enables the immediate feedback to questions that students often desire. Skype has been effective in increasing institutional engagement for offshore VU students and partner teachers and in enhancing the VU experience.

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longitudinal study of the effectiveness of clickers in classroom assessment is still pending, initial research has demonstrated that clickers “improve attendance and student participation” (Kenwright, 2009, p. 1).

Conclusion

With the continual advances in technology, instructors today have many more teaching options available to create a classroom environment that is nurturing and receptive to the learning styles of the 21st-century student. Both high-tech (e.g., clickers, electronic resources for researching papers and preparing visual aids) and low-tech (e.g., index cards) tools can be combined easily and seamlessly, often within the same class period, to create an active and engaging learning experience. The strategies presented in this article are efficient (i.e., both in time and money) and effective teaching tactics that can be incorporated into any classroom setting to foster greater student academic success and engagement.

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to implement a park recycling program and add recycling concepts to their children’s curriculum. These students also reported that increased knowledge of college organization and resources (through the project-based FYS course) has made them better contributors. In addition, a campus organization, EC Greenjays, was formed by students associated with the course to promote sustainability in the College, and former students recorded a video clip discussing the merits and drawbacks of the project-based approach. This post-course involvement with the College and community has been highlighted in the campus magazine.

Project-based courses can be effective in facilitating several key learning outcomes for first-year students, including improved critical thinking and problem-solving skills; enhanced peer, faculty, institutional, and community engagement; and greater academic and student success through real-world applicability of learning and knowledge. In addition, the format provides valuable training and experience in both self-directed and team work. While the details of implementation may vary, the project-based structure can be used successfully for first-year students in all fields.

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E-Source Submission Guidelines

For complete guidelines and issue dates, see www.nrc.fye.sc.edu/esource/submission.

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

Style: Articles, tables, figures, and references should adhere to APA (American Psychological Association) style. *E-Source* does not publish endorsements of products for sale.

Format: Submissions should be sent via e-mail as a Microsoft Word attachment.

Length: Original feature-length articles should be 750-1200 words. Annotations of new resources should be no more than 500 words. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for length. Photographs are welcome.

Please address all questions and submissions to:

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What's Happening at the National Resource Center

Conferences

23rd International Conference on The First-Year Experience®

June 7-10, 2010

Maui, Hawaii



The 23rd International Conference on The First-Year Experience provides a setting for sharing ideas, concepts, resources, assessment tools, programmatic interventions, and research results focused on the first year of college/university. Join with educators from countries around the world as we explore approaches for enhancing the first-year student experience and provide opportunities for intensive learning and relaxed interactions. For more information, visit <http://www.sc.edu/fye/ifye/index.html>

Publications

Monograph No. 52

International Perspectives on the First-Year Experience in Higher Education

Diane Nutt and Denis Calderon, Editors

Produced in collaboration with Teesside University, United Kingdom

Based on the National Resource Center's successful *Exploring the Evidence* series, we are pleased to offer this inaugural collection of international first-year initiatives, demonstrating the portability and adaptability of these strategies in a variety of institutional contexts. Cases from a dozen different countries touch on a wide range of topics, including: academic advising and support, comprehensive program design, early-warning systems for at-risk students, electronic portfolios, first-year seminars, learning communities, orientation or induction, peer mentoring, retention initiatives, self-regulated learning, and Supplemental Instruction or peer-assisted study sessions. Students of higher education will value this volume for the rare glimpse it offers of international first-year transition programs and for the opportunity to compare programs from a wide range of educational contexts. Educators involved in the first-year experience will find both familiar strategies and insightful innovations to inform program design and assessment. To learn more or to order a copy, visit <http://sc.edu/fye/publications/monograph/monographs/ms052.html>

A Faculty and Staff Guide to Creating Learning Outcomes

Jimmie Gahagan, John Dingfelder, and Katharine Pei

Produced in association with the Office of Student Engagement, University of South Carolina

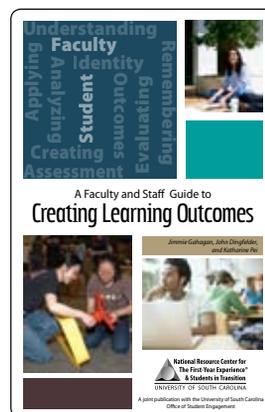
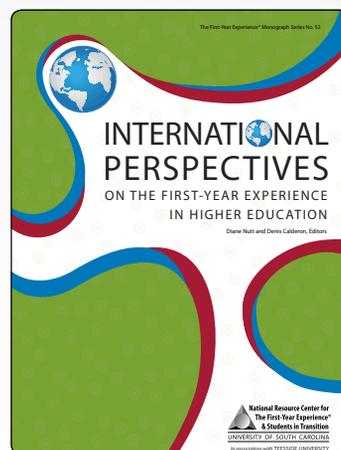
For more than a decade, educators have focused on illustrating the effectiveness of educational interventions by measuring changes in grade point averages, retention, satisfaction, and participation. What such measures don't tell us is what students know or are able to do as a result of their educational experiences. Yet, this is the kind of data colleges and universities are increasingly asked to report by state legislatures, regional accrediting agencies, and a number of other stakeholders. Responding to this call requires new assessment vehicles that report success through the eyes of students using measureable learning outcomes for courses, programs of study, and cocurricular experiences. *A Faculty and*

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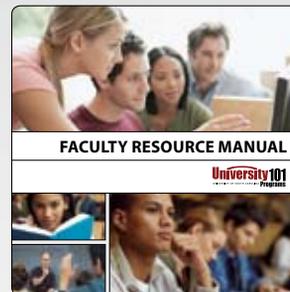
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Staff Guide to Creating Learning Outcomes presents a framework for developing and assessing student learning outcomes in a brief, accessible format. To learn more or to order a copy, visit <http://sc.edu/fye/publications/bb/ar/index.html>

University 101 Programs Faculty Resource Manual

Designed by the University 101 staff and campus partners at the University of South Carolina, this resource manual provides instructional faculty with a how-to guide for designing, managing, teaching, and evaluating student work in the first-year seminar. The manual includes a detailed discussion of course management that offers suggestions for working with first-year students, designing a syllabus, establishing grading policies, building community in the classroom, and working with a peer leader. Chapters on topics common to first-year seminars offer resources for students and suggested assignments and classroom activities. Presented on a CD-ROM, the materials can be adapted for particular campus contexts. To learn more or to order a copy, visit <http://sc.edu/fye/publications/transitions/u101002.html>



Research

The National Resource Center is pleased to share the following upcoming opportunities to learn about the results of research studies conducted by the Center:

Student Transitions: Toward Understanding the College Student Experience

Keynote address by Mary Stuart Hunter at the 2010 Kent Academic Support and Advising Association (KASADA) Annual Conference, NEOUCOM Conference Center, Rootstown, Ohio, May 18.

Sophomore Student Success: Definitional Issues, National Data, and Best Practices

General interest session scheduled for presentation at the 2010 Kent Academic Support and Advising Association (KASADA) Annual Conference, NEOUCOM Conference Center, Rootstown, Ohio, May 18.

Examining the Structure of High-Impact Educational Practices on American College Campuses: A Synthesis of Three National Surveys

A scholarly paper presentation at the 2010 AIR Forum, Chicago, Illinois, May 29-June 2.

Paul P. Fidler Research Grant

The Paul P. Fidler Research Grant is designed to encourage the development and dissemination of knowledge that has the potential to improve the experiences of college students in transition. The grant is named in memory of Dr. Paul P. Fidler, a faculty member at the University of South Carolina, whose pioneering research on student learning and success had a vital impact on work being done to promote the success of all students in transition.

The Paul P. Fidler Research Grant award includes a cash stipend, travel to two national conferences, a presentation at a national conference, and priority consideration for publication. Completed applications must be received by the National Resource Center by midnight EST, July 1, 2010. To learn about the grant, visit www.sc.edu/fye/research/grant.

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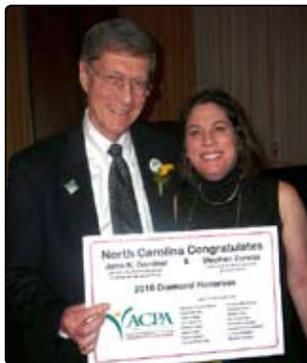
Mary Stuart Hunter
Executive Director

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Awards

ACPA Diamond Honoree – John N. Gardner

John N. Gardner has been selected by the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Foundation as a member of their 2010 Class of Diamond Honorees. The Diamond Honoree Program, established by the ACPA Foundation in 1999, is both a recognition program and a fund-raising activity. Those recognized as Diamond Honorees are selected by the Foundation Board of Trustees for their outstanding and sustained contributions to higher education and to student affairs. Gardner was honored during the Foundation's Diamond Honoree Ceremony and Reception, held March 22, 2010, at the ACPA International Convention in Boston. He is one of just 16 to be inducted into the honor roll of the Foundation's Diamond Honorees.



John N. Gardner

New Staff

Ryan Padgett will begin as the new Assistant Director of Research, Grants, and Assessment on May 17, 2010. His background in research and assessment most recently include his roles as a research analyst for the Center for Research on Undergraduate Education at the University of Iowa and as a project associate for the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) at Indiana University. He is currently completing his PhD in Higher Education at the University of Iowa and earned his MS in Higher Education and BA in Psychology from Indiana University. Padgett will assume responsibility for all the Center's research efforts and assessment activities.



Ryan Padgett

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