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Creating a Comprehensive Sophomore Year Experience

The Sophomore Year Experience (SYE) program at the College of Saint Benedict (CSB), a private, residential, Benedictine, liberal arts college for women, is intended to support sophomores through a year of critical decisions. Many of the events that make up the SYE have been in place for several years under CSB's Residential Life programming model. However, with an increase in national attention on sophomore transitions, CSB performed a needs assessment in the 2006-2007 academic year. Through focus groups and surveys, sophomores requested an expansion of programming. Requests included a sophomore retreat, sophomore T-shirts, information on selecting a major, study abroad prospects, and career path exploration, as well as opportunities for social camaraderie. The college's response was to (a) increase marketing through a SYE brochure, newsletter, bulletin boards, and web site; (b) restructure existing campus programs for inclusion into SYE, such as collaborative programs with Advising Services and Career Services; and (c) create new programs to enhance SYE.

Existing and restructured programs consist of (a) a second-year soccer game with distribution of sophomore T-shirts, (b) a wisdom panel (e.g., students share experiences of curricular and cocurricular opportunities and the impact these events have had on their college experience and life plans), (c) a study abroad alumnae panel, and (d) an advising and internship program (e.g., representatives from the academic advising and internship offices present information on their services). In addition to this programming, three new events, highlighted below, were introduced in the 2008-2009 academic year: Sophomore Getaway, Sophomore Formal Halfway-There Dinner, and SYE's Cup Philosophy.

Sophomore Getaway

This kick-off event consists of activities that allow students to focus on their goals, values, and peer relationships in a retreat setting. The pilot was capped at 21 registrants due to limited funding and

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Class T-shirts designed by sophomore students (Photo courtesy of the author)

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transportation (average class size is about 500 students); however, as interest in the getaway grows, more students may be allowed to register for a small fee to offset the cost. The getaway was held the weekend before fall semester move-in at an off-campus lakeshore retreat center late Friday afternoon through Saturday evening. This time frame worked well as the students were well-rested, eager to reconnect with friends and the college environment, and scheduling conflicts were minimal. The retreat consisted of the following activities:

- *Board-Breaking Exercise.* A Tae Kwon Do instructor was hired to break boards with the students (i.e., using pine boards, which are the safest option for beginners). Every student at the event opted to participate. The main points of discussion focused on stretching oneself in the sophomore year to take on new challenges and following through to get results. These ideas aligned well with the intent and steps needed to break a board successfully.
- *Sophomore Shirt Design.* As a welcome gift, each sophomore received a free CSB T-shirt. The students who attended the retreat had the privilege of working collaboratively to design that year's SYE T-shirt, using themes they believed define or appeal to the sophomore class.
- *The Five Tibetans.* Students learned to perform this collection of yoga-like exercises, which are both relaxing and energizing. The movements can easily be performed within small spaces such as residence hall rooms. The group discussed the mind-body connection, a theory that holds that physical activity allows the mind to function better and vice versa. These exercises are included in an effort to help students lead balanced lives as they approach new challenges in the sophomore year.
- *Alumnae Panel Presentation and Lunch.* Three alumnae shared their sophomore experiences including favorite memories, inspirational moments, things they wish they would have done differently, and the decisions they made concerning their majors and study abroad plans. The formal presentation was followed by informal conversations with students over the lunch.
- *Budget and Finance Workshop.* A young married couple, both recent college graduates with budget and financial expertise, discussed their personal budget including mortgage costs, property tax, insurance premiums, retirement savings, and other items that students should be aware of in the future. The couple also talked about repaying student loans and tips on possible "hidden" costs such as pay-off penalties, as well as the importance of developing good savings and spending habits while still in school.
- *Assertiveness Activity.* The students were split into groups to discuss a wilderness survival scenario. Each student answered 10 multiple choice questions, afterwards the groups convened to come to consensus on the same 10 questions. Discussion followed on the challenges of communicating effectively and gender stereotypes that can inhibit women from being assertive.
- *Values Exercise.* Each student was given a deck of "values cards" (i.e., displaying values such as genuineness, kindness, sustainability,



Board-breaking exercise during the sophomore get-away retreat (Photo courtesy of the author)

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and God's will) to sort into categories of importance. Students then selected their five most and least important personal values and displayed them in a pie chart in order of importance. Participants were encouraged to reflect on whether their pie charts mirrored values expressed in their daily lives.

Cup Philosophy

As a Benedictine campus, living in community is a cornerstone of the student experience. Using a quote from the bestselling book *Three Cups of Tea* as an inspiration,

The first time you share tea..., you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honored guest. The third time you share a cup of tea you become family... you must make time to share three cups of tea. (Mortenson, 2006, p. 150)

each sophomore was given a SYE coffee cup and encouraged to gather their friends and bring their cups to each SYE event to have them filled with something delicious.

Sophomore Formal Halfway-There Dinner

Formal invitations were prepared for a special, celebratory black-tie event, and the president of the college was invited to address the class. The president's remarks focused on how far the sophomore class has come while preparing for the time they have left in college.

Assessment

Year-to-year retention rates at CSB are significantly higher than national averages (i.e., averaging 88.5% for first-to-second year retention and 82.4% for second-to-third year retention); a strong indication that the existing programming supported students throughout their sophomore year. It is too soon to tell if improved retention rates will serve as an indicator of the success of the changes and additions to the SYE program, but assessment data on new and reconfigured initiatives are being collected.

Summary

Future modifications to the SYE programming will be implemented based on feedback from an assessment survey, which will be administered in spring 2009. The College of Saint Benedict's Sophomore Year Experience program demonstrates how a campus can assemble a comprehensive SYE by (a) examining existing campus programming and restructuring it with a sophomore focus, (b) adding new programming tailored to sophomore needs and specific student requests, and (c) effectively marketing the initiative to the sophomore cohort.

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Sharing a cup of tea as part of CSB's "cup philosophy" (Photo courtesy of the author)



The Big Picture

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Extrinsic Motivational Strategies for Promoting Student Reading

The previous issue of this column focused primarily on strategies designed to promote students' intrinsic motivation for reading. This article focuses on extrinsic motivational strategies that create clear and direct connections between textbook reading and course grades. As Weimer (1989) exhorts,

Give students reasons to read. This means do more in class than repeat what's in the book. If everything that's in the book gets repeated in class, that makes the reading boring if you come to class, and the class boring if you've done the reading. It's a no-win proposition. (p. 1)

The following strategies are designed to increase student accountability for completing reading assignments.

Class Participation

Explicitly articulate in the course syllabus and on the first day of class that class participation counts toward the course grade. Participation means informed speaking, which incorporates information obtained from the assigned reading.

The One-Minute Paper Quiz

At the start of class, have students complete a one-minute paper in response to a question relating to a concept contained in the assigned reading. One-minute papers can serve as pop quizzes given periodically throughout the term and counting toward the final grade.

Exam Questions

Draw exam questions from both classroom learning experiences and assigned readings. Research on college exams reveals that they rarely include test questions based primarily or solely on assigned reading (Flippo & Caverly, 1991); instead, professors rely heavily or exclusively on test questions drawn from their lecture notes (Kierwa, 2000). Inclusive evaluation recognizes knowledge acquired from multiple settings and contexts.

See CUSEO, p. 5

Reading Objectives

Supply students with specific intended outcomes related to the assigned reading, and hold students responsible for these objectives by tying them directly to test questions or crediting written responses to the objectives toward the final grade. Reading study guides comprised of specific reading objectives serve to clearly indicate to students what ideas in their assigned reading should be most closely attended to, learned, and retained. There is also a solid body of empirical evidence demonstrating that when students are provided with specific reading objectives or questions to help guide their reading, their retention and comprehension of what they read are significantly enhanced (e.g., Winograd & Hare, 1988).

While all college students need to be challenged to read independently, reading objectives can supply first-year students with the supportive structure they need for meeting the challenge of college-level reading.

Benefits of Reading Objectives for Students

- Self motivation—If students know where to focus their reading efforts and that a direct relationship between their reading and their grade exists, they become more motivated to read. Perhaps nothing can be more unmotivating or disheartening for students than to study hard and to realize later that they studied the “wrong” things.
- Self-monitoring—Specific reading objectives facilitate early self-monitoring, helping students identify what they know and don’t know before their course grade is adversely affected.
- Lower test anxiety—Reading study guides can clarify test expectations and provide students with a structure for test preparation. Reading guides can be particularly helpful for first-year students to reduce their anxiety about not being able to “figure out” what their instructor wants them to learn.

Benefits of Reading Objectives for Instructors

- Focus attention on central concepts—Not all information in any reading assignment is equally important for students to know. Providing students with reading objectives increases the likelihood that, amid the wealth of information presented in the textbook, students will expend effort on learning what the instructor deems most important for them to learn. By identifying high-priority concepts, instructors ensure that their students spend their out-of-class time learning on concepts that are critical rather than trivial. As Meyers and Jones point out,

Reading is such a fundamental learning activity that we need to guide students’ reading efforts and provide some structure to those reading assignments. Too often we expect that by simply having students do a certain amount of reading, our objectives will be successfully accomplished. That is usually not the case. (1993, p. 28)

See CUSEO, p. 8

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Library Fear Deconstructed: Overcoming Library Anxiety

A college student's success is often determined by his or her ability to negotiate the information highway effectively (i.e., information literacy skills) and differentiate between convenient information (e.g., a simple Google search) and value-added information (e.g., in-depth scholarly research). Students are not taught how to do effective searches and they do not know how to ask for information assistance. As a result, students may experience "library anxiety," a term Mellon (1986) first coined to describe college students' fear of the campus library and librarians. According to Mellon, 75% to 85% of undergraduate students described their initial library research experiences in terms of anxiety that stemmed from several factors including (a) the relative size of the library, (b) a lack of knowledge about the location of materials, (c) the use of equipment and library resources, and (d) inadequate library research skills. Library anxiety is also characterized by feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment regarding perceived attitudes of ones' library skills. Students' feelings of ineptness are heightened by the assumption that they alone possess incompetent library skills and that asking questions will only reveal further ignorance (Jiao & Onwegubuzie, 1997).

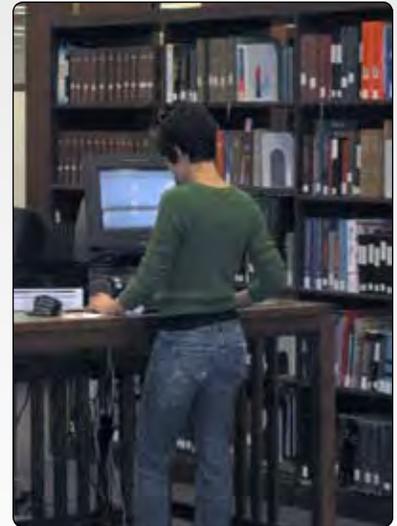
Mellon (1988) noted that "Students become so anxious about having to gather information in a library for their research papers that they are unable to approach the problem logically or effectively." However, students do vary in their levels of library anxiety, and studies have shown that first-year students exhibited the highest level of apprehension (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1999). To quantitatively measure Mellon's theory of library anxiety, Bostick (1993) devised the Library Anxiety Scale (LAS), a 43-item, 5-point Likert-scale instrument, which assesses and identifies five factors contributing to library fear:

- Affective barriers – feelings of inadequacy about using the library
- Mechanical barriers – knowledge of where library equipment is located (e.g., computers, printers, copy machines, microform machines, change machines) and the procedures to use this equipment (e.g., whether a copy card or exact change is needed; understanding what a microform is and which machine to use for different formats; where to retrieve printed copies)
- Comfort with the library – library ambiance and how safe, welcoming, and nonthreatening the library seems
- Knowledge of the library – familiarity with the library layout and library jargon
- Barriers with staff – perceptions that librarians and other library staff members are intimidating, unapproachable, or too busy to help

See LIBRARY, p. 7

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Students may not be aware that an online library catalog and specialized search engines are available. University of South Carolina, Thomas Cooper Library

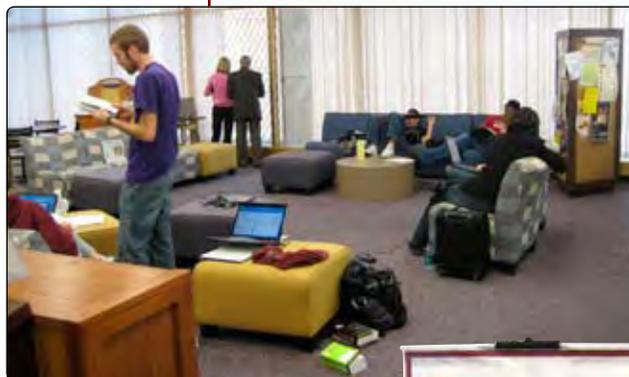
Librarian Strategies

Librarians can alleviate library anxiety in a variety of ways. First, they can ensure there is ample and clear signage for all aspects of library services including location of the various desks (e.g., reserve, circulation, reference), resource centers, equipment locations, and equipment instructions. Creating FAQ sheets, tutorials, or web pages can provide students with easy and quick reference tools. A glossary of common library terms can demystify library jargon such as the difference between reference and reserve; the meaning of “in library use;” the differences between magazines, journals, and periodicals; and common library acronyms (e.g., MLA, APA, ILL). In addition, fact sheets or tutorials on how to use the Library of Congress (LC) classification system can help relieve student fears and frustrations in using LC especially since most students have grown up with the Dewey Decimal system.

Offering information literacy courses will enable students to learn how to conduct a successful research project and train them on the different interfaces of the many library databases. Such courses can train students in effective search strategies, (i.e., broadening and narrowing searches, keyword searching versus subject searching, and using Boolean operators). Information literacy courses will also introduce the student to the many services a librarian can provide. Librarians cannot effectively serve those who understand neither their purpose nor their expertise.

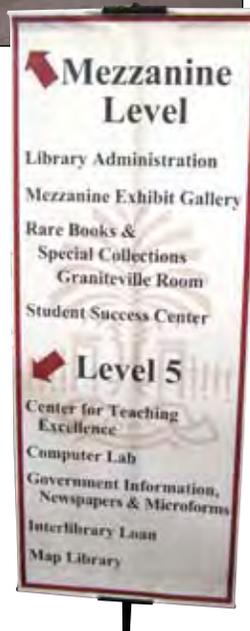
Reference librarians can have the biggest impact on a student’s first impression of the library since they are generally the first point of contact for library users. Approachability requires using both positive verbal and nonverbal communication. Positive, nonverbal communication exhibits itself through certain behaviors such as raised eyebrows, eye contact, nodding, and most importantly—smiling! When a student seeks library assistance, it is important that the librarian generates questions relevant to the subject the student is researching, appear openly interested in the kind of information the student is seeking, and ensure that the student’s needs have been met. Teasing out what nervous students actually need can be a tricky task. The librarian must assess what the assignment is, what level of sophistication the student brings to it, and how much information the student can absorb. Providing privacy at the reference desk can also reduce the embarrassment factor for students.

Dedicating separate areas within the library for students to hang out with friends, work on a group project, grab a snack or cup of coffee, read the newspaper, check e-mail, and study in a quiet space can create a comfortable multi-purpose atmosphere for students, encouraging them to think of the library as a place for both academic and social pursuits.



Comfortable seating areas and prominent signage make the library an inviting and user-friendly space.

University of South Carolina, Thomas Cooper Library



See LIBRARY, p. 8

Finally, providing tours of the campus libraries can dispel fears regarding the size and complexity of university or college libraries and make students aware of specialized libraries and collections. Students are likely to feel more comfortable using the library after attending a traditional staff-led bibliographic instruction session, mainly due to the interaction the students have with the librarian. A staff-led library instruction session can serve as a time for the students to meet and get to know the librarian as someone who can be a valuable resource in the future.

Conclusion

These strategies can effectively address the affective, mechanical, environmental, staff, and knowledge barriers that contribute to library anxiety. By intentionally integrating these strategies into college students' learning experience and the library's design and ambiance, librarians can play a critical role in not only eliminating library anxiety but also in creating lifelong learners.

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- Increase the test validity of course exams—When reading-based test questions are drawn from the same pool of reading objectives that students are learning, test content validity is increased by ensuring congruence between content expected to be learned and content actually tested (Gronlund, 1985).

Creating clear and direct connections between reading and course grades not only provides the motivation for students to read but it can also promote more successful student learning strategies and outcomes.

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Mayville State University Revamps First-Year Seminar

Mayville State University is a small, public Midwestern university with a total student population of approximately 800 students, with 100 in the first-year class. Since 1992, Mayville has offered an elective first-year seminar, which was taught by a variety of college staff members. After 1999, the course became a requirement for students admitted at the associate level (i.e., missing core course requirements for admission). Enrollment history data from 1996-2007 revealed sporadic enrollment levels ranging from 7.4 % to a high of 35.9 % of first-year cohort, and post-1999, few regularly admitted students took the class.

Using Title III Department of Education grant monies, in the fall of 2007, the University undertook the mission of developing a first-year team advising process and revamping the first-year seminar with a goal of improving overall student retention rates and seminar enrollment rates. A task force comprised of staff, faculty, coaches, and the vice president for student affairs gathered for several brainstorming sessions to discuss seminar format and content. Recommendations were then presented to a group of student tutors for their feedback.

The intent was to develop first-year seminars for at-risk, transfer, and honors student populations; however, because task force members felt the program would be beneficial to all students, it was decided that rather than piloting a small cohort, the seminar would be offered to all students during the fall of 2008. The course was titled Seminar on Success (SOS) and was offered as an elective, one-credit, letter-graded course counting toward overall credits for graduation. The SOS acronym (i.e., Morse code distress signal) was deliberately chosen for the seminar and served as a guiding metaphor for a course teaching college and life success skills during the critical first-year transition.

The class met once a week during a two-hour time block. Eight academic advisors served as instructors with six choosing to teach the classes individually and two opting to team teach because of course loads. The instructors also served as the individual academic advisors for the students enrolled in their class. To ensure that all topics identified by the task force were covered in the seminar and to coordinate topics and discussion for bi-weekly instructor meetings, all eight instructors used the same textbook, *Thriving in College and Beyond*, and the same shell for their syllabi, including order of topics and general assignments. Topics included career exploration, health and wellness, diversity, time and money management, and strategic learning. Each class collectively or as individuals completed a service-learning project and attended a minimum of two campus events (e.g., sport or cultural events).

The course was promoted primarily via verbal information to students and parents at summer registration. The SOS instructors played a large role in helping incoming first-year students register for courses, ensuring the SOS option was not overlooked and answering questions regarding the course.

Ninety students enrolled in Mayville's fall 2007 cohort, and 84 finished the semester with 68 students (81%) completing SOS. Additionally, 80% of full-time, first-year

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SOS - a call
or request for
help or rescue

See MAYVILLE, p. 10

students who finished the fall 2008 term, the majority completing SOS, earned grade point averages above 2.0, compared to 62% for fall 2007 and 74% in both 2006 and 2005.

Students were surveyed at the end of the course and 57 of the 68 students enrolled at that time, completed surveys. Students completed a SOS course evaluation as well as an instructor assessment. The students were asked about the format of the course and most and least helpful aspects of the course. They were asked to rate the textbook and rank order the topics that had been covered in terms of relevance and helpfulness. Students were also asked if they felt the course should be required for all students and their rationale for their response, as well as whether the course had impacted their decision to remain at the University.

Students appreciated the structure of the class with regard to having their advisor as their instructor, small class size, and the combination discussion and lecture format. Most helpful aspects of the course included getting involved in events and making friends, educational planning, and learning about personality and learning styles. Career exploration and college course planning along with time and money management and test taking skills received the highest topic rankings. Aspects cited as the least helpful included campus event reports, liberal arts, and the two-hour class length.

Sixty-eight percent of students felt the course should be required for reasons such as, "it helps the student create a foundation for their learning experience" and "the class gets you involved with other freshmen and the community." About one third of the students indicated the course had impacted their decision to remain at the University stating, "I was thinking about transferring but now I want to stay after seeing what classes I would start taking" and "it helped me decide what I want to major in."

Five of the eight original instructors have indicated plans to return to teaching the course during fall 2009, and three new instructors/advisors have been added. The use of peer mentors in the course is also being explored. The course will remain an elective for now; however, we are exploring the possibility of making the seminar a requirement or general education course. The seminar will be shortened to one hour in response to student and instructor feedback. Retention rates of the first-year class from spring to fall will be examined and longitudinal comparisons will be made during the next three years.

Based on enrollment numbers for the first year and encouraging student and instructor feedback, the revamped SOS course has successfully "rescued" Mayville's first-year seminar initiative. In addition, having course instructors serve as the students' academic advisors and actively promote the course during summer registration contributed to the success of the program. Future longitudinal data will determine if SOS will also have the anticipated rescue effect on Mayville's student retention rates.

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Improving First-Year Students’ Out-of-Classroom Faculty Interactions

Next to their peers, faculty can be the second most influential socializing agent for college students. Student-faculty interactions affect most of the desirable college student outcomes including personal and intellectual development, academic achievement, satisfaction, and persistence (Cuseo, 2009). However, many faculty and students struggle to meaningfully connect with one another (Cotten & Wilson, 2006).

A qualitative study at Indiana University, examined student-faculty interactions from the student perspective (Vianden, 2006). The questions guiding the study included (a) what participants perceived they would gain from potential interactions with faculty outside of class, (b) what factors they perceived as helping or hindering interaction, and (c) how they made decisions about whether or not to interact with faculty outside of class.

All first-semester, first-year, White, male students, who had not interacted with faculty outside of class for more than 10 minutes during the first six weeks of the fall semester, were considered for the study. Of the 60 men who responded to an initial e-mail invitation and met the selection criteria, 14 elected to participate in the study. Sampling excluded students of color and women to avoid potential gendered or racial power relationships with a White male researcher, and the first six-week time frame was chosen since it is frequently used as a benchmark for student success and persistence. Three interviews with each participant took place between early October and early December 2005. Data were analyzed using an inductive approach. The first interview focused on the students’ life histories, specifically on relationships with family and teachers in high school. Interview 2 focused on current college experiences, specifically perceptions of faculty and peers. The final interview asked students to anticipate what interacting with faculty would be like for them in the future.

While the majority of participants were able to identify ways in which they might benefit from faculty interactions (e.g., better understanding of the subject matter, gaining a sense of comfort and familiarity with the institution), reservations about meeting with faculty (e.g., awkwardness, not anticipating a need for academic help, intimidation, perceived negative faculty interpersonal behaviors) continued to outweigh positive benefits. Several students commented that as a result of discussing the issue through the interview process, they had a greater interest in exploring faculty interactions; however, consensus at the final interview was that no interaction would be sought in the future unless there was a dire need for academic assistance.

The participants regarded positive interpersonal behaviors as one of the main facilitators of potential interactions with faculty outside of class. These included showing openness and flexibility towards the student, being interested in the student’s personal life, being friendly and caring, and recognizing the student on campus. Participants considered the faculty displaying these specific behaviors as more approachable. Positive interpersonal behaviors “humanized” the faculty. For example, one student stated, “There is a sense of calmness knowing that these professors are human too; they laugh and make mistakes the same as you” (Jake). Another student

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“These professors are human too; they laugh and make mistakes the same as you.”

See OUT-OF-CLASSROOM, p. 12

spoke about the impact of negative faculty behaviors, "A kid asked a question and [the professor] said, 'You should read the material.' That makes me feel even less comfortable approaching her after class if I needed something" (Shane).

While this study focused specifically on first-year college men, recommendations for campus educators emerged that could be applied to a broader population of students to enhance out-of-class student-faculty interactions.

Spend time on introductions. Faculty who directly address students' anxieties by sharing something about themselves, their family, or their hobbies as well as expressing an interest in learning about their students will ease apprehensions and likely motivate students to take the relationship further. It is also important for faculty, however, to strike a balance between being warm and interpersonal and establishing appropriate boundaries with students.

Thoroughly explain office hours. Office hours can be a new concept for most first-year students, and undergraduates may not know how to take advantage of them. Students need to be instructed that an office visit should not be viewed only as a last resort for seeking academic assistance but that there are other benefits available to the student including speaking about research interests; discussing course selection; inquiring about internships, study abroad, or other work-related opportunities; or sharing a personal concern. To ease student apprehension, faculty need to be prepared to take the lead in establishing rapport during an office visit (e.g., have the student reintroduce him- or herself, call the student by name, start the conversation with a chat about a recent campus social or sports event).

Actively foster student-faculty interaction. Faculty are not the only members on campus who can affect the way students feel about potential out-of-class faculty interactions. Student affairs staff in orientation, first-year experience offices, residence life, and other departments can create environments that actively foster such contact. At the University of Arkansas, the residence life department connects faculty with first-year students during an initial campus welcome dinner, at concerts, during service-learning opportunities (e.g., river cleanups), at movie viewings, or at yoga sessions, assuring the activity is meaningful to both faculty and student. Faculty lead a handful of these activities per year within the structures of a residential curriculum, in a faculty-in-residence program, or in learning communities. They are actively recruited by housing staff members and other, already-involved faculty, and receive stipends. Faculty build in a reflective component after each activity to help facilitate and assess student learning. Student feedback consistently documents how much students enjoy getting to "hang out" with faculty while still pursuing mutually beneficial and intellectual endeavors.

Knowing out-of-class interactions with faculty may directly translate into tangible results, including improved grades and college success, may motivate students to establish stronger faculty relationships. In addition, curricular and cocurricular strategies that create environments in which students easily connect with faculty and that portray faculty in a more approachable and human light can encourage the mutually beneficial outcomes promised by such interactions.

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National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition Advisory Board

Introduction

In order to fulfill our mission of improving student learning and transitions, the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition seeks to advance and support a global community of educators who promote student success, learning, and development. One effort to collaborate with this community of scholars has been the creation of a National Advisory Board, which serves in a consultative role for the Center, giving advice and contributing suggestions for publications, research topics, and marketing strategies; providing suggestions for conference speakers and publication authors and editors; evaluating print and marketing materials; evaluating portfolios of nominees for the Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate Award; reviewing proposals for the Paul P. Fidler Research Grant; authoring articles in the *Journal of The First Year Experience and Students in Transition*, *E-Source for College Transitions* newsletter, or other publications; and providing guidance on the pursuit of external funding. The contributions of these individuals have been and continue to be vital to our work in improving the lives of students.

Members of the Advisory Board include leaders and experts in higher education, representing a variety of institutional types, professional associations, and research centers. There are 16 advisors, and terms are staggered over a four-year period. The Center is pleased to present a four-part series introducing the members of our Advisory Board, beginning with those whose terms end in 2009.

John Braxton

John M. Braxton is a professor of Education at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. His scholarly interests include the sociology of the academic profession, academic course-level processes, and the college student experience, specifically college student departure, college choice process, scientific misconduct, and the normative structure of undergraduate college teaching. Among his more than 80 publications, Braxton has authored such books as *Faculty Misconduct in Collegiate Teaching* (with Alan E. Bayer), *Understanding and Reducing College Student Departure* (with Amy S. Hirschy and Shederick McClendon), and *Institutionalizing a Broader View of Scholarship Through Boyer's Four Domains* (with William Luckey and Patricia Helland). He has also edited such volumes as *Reworking the Student Departure Puzzle* and *Addressing Faculty and Student Classroom Improprieties* (co-edited with Alan E. Bayer). Professor Braxton is currently the editor of the *Journal of College Student Development*. He previously served as a consulting editor for the *Journal of Higher Education* and for *Research in Higher Education* and is a member of the editorial board for the *Journal of College Student Retention*. His service to the profession also includes his past work as the president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE).

Peter Ewell

Peter Ewell is the vice president at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), a research and development center that focuses on improving the management effectiveness of colleges and universities. A graduate of Haverford College, Ewell earned both his M.Phil and PhD degrees from Yale University, and went on to serve on the faculty at the University of Chicago and coordinate long-range planning at Governors State University. He became vice president of



John Braxton



Peter Ewell



Vivia Fowler



Bonita Jacobs

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NCHEMS in 1981. His research includes assessing institutional effectiveness and the outcomes of college, and he has worked directly with nearly 400 colleges and universities and 24 state systems, as well as a variety of nonprofit and arts organizations on assessment, program review, organizational development, strategic planning, enrollment management, and student retention. Ewell has authored six books and numerous articles on these topics and has also prepared several commissioned papers for national agencies. Two of his books, *The Self-Regarding Institution: Information for Excellence and Assessing Educational Outcomes*, have been widely cited in the development of campus-based assessment programs. His service to the profession also includes his leadership of the design team for the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and its Technical Advisory Panel.

Vivia Fowler

Vivia Fowler is the dean and vice president for Academic Affairs at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia. A graduate of Columbia College in South Carolina, Fowler earned her MA from the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and her PhD in Foundations of Education from the University of South Carolina. An ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, Fowler served United Methodist churches for 10 years before joining the faculty of Columbia College in 1986, where she was the director of General Education, director of the Center for Engaged Learning, Spears Professor of Religion, and the director of Learning Communities, among several other positions. She became the dean of Wesleyan College in 2007. Fowler's expertise lies in the area of the first-year experience, and in her time at Columbia College, she led the Foundations of Excellence in the First Year of College initiative and the College's participation in the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education. She has been honored with the National Resource Center's Outstanding First-Year Student Advocate Award and the United Methodist Church's Francis Asbury Award for Fostering United Methodist Ministries in Higher Education. Her service to the profession also includes the development of ChristianEd, a web-based program that provides training for United Methodist church leaders around the world.

Bonita Jacobs

Bonita Jacobs is vice president for Student Development and associate professor of Higher Education at the University of North Texas. She is a former editor of *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition* and is the recipient of the Outstanding Contributions to the Orientation Profession Award and The President's Award, both from the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA), as well as the Ted. K. Miller Achievement of Excellence Award from the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS). She also received the John Jones Award for Outstanding Performance as a Senior Student Affairs Officer from the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Region III. She is the founder and executive director of the National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students. Her publications include *The College Transfer Student in America: The Forgotten Student* and *Starting From Scratch* (a first-year experience textbook); chapters in *Student Academic Services in Higher Education: A Comprehensive Handbook for the 21st Century*, *Designing Successful Transitions: A Guide for Orienting Students to College*, *The Orientation Planning Manual*, *College Counseling: Issues and Strategies for a New Millennium*, and numerous journal articles and reviews. Jacobs is the principal investigator for several grants including a \$3 million Title III grant, a \$475,000 Health and Human Services grant, and a \$300,000 Texas Coordinating Board grant. She is a frequent speaker and consultant on student transition issues and transfer student migration.

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eSOURCE FOR COLLEGE TRANSITIONS

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Resource Spotlight

National Issues Forums/Kettering Foundation

Based on the premise that “citizens cannot act together until they decide together,” the National Issues Forums (NIF), a nonpartisan, national network of locally sponsored forums, identifies major issues of public concern and in collaboration with the Kettering Foundation, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research institute, produces books and materials on these issues. Each book, ranging from 25-40 pages, provides an overview of an issue and puts forward several different approaches and courses of action. Purposefully devoid of any partisan labels, readers are encouraged to judge each approach on its merits (e.g., advantages, disadvantages, consequences, and costs).

Designed to encourage deliberative dialogue, the books provide a useful tool for developing critical thinking and discussion skills. Rather than trying to find “one” way to address an issue, the format encourages students to find areas where interests and goals overlap, to see issues from different points of view, and to work together to find common ground for action. The topic issues lend themselves to discussion and the development of activities that engage students in curricular and cocurricular academic and social experiences.

Topics span a variety of subjects pertinent to key college transition points (e.g., alcohol usage, diversity issues, job preparation, civic responsibility) and are appropriate for different learning venues (e.g., classroom, residence hall, learning communities).

National Issues Forum materials provide an engaging and meaningful approach to teach critical thinking skills and connect students to their peers and instructors through participatory, integrative, and reflective learning.

First in the Family/What Kids Can Do

What Kids Can Do (WKCD) is a national nonprofit organization representing the voice of the nation’s youth as agents for justice, understanding, and social change. Through its publishing arm, Next Generation Press, and with funding from the Lumina Education Foundation, WKCD produces *First in the Family* support materials for first-generation college students.

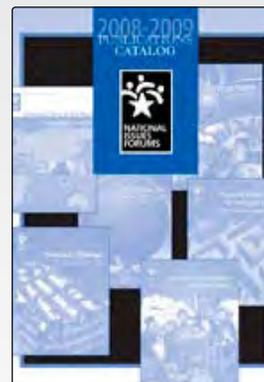
First in the Family materials present first-hand wisdom, tips, and advice from current first-generation college students to those who will follow. Materials use the power of peers as a tool to ease the apprehension and isolation first-generation and low-income students may feel during their transition to college. In students’ own voices, six short audio-slideshows and an accompanying book describe the stresses of academic culture shock, pressing family responsibilities, and job commitments that compete with studies. Students also speak about peer mentor networks, living and learning communities, and faculty-student collaborations that strengthen their self-concept as members of a scholarly community.

Designed for use by first-generation college students and the faculty and staff who guide them, *First in the Family* materials are strong conversation starters for orientation programming, first-year seminars, student support groups, or administrative strategy sessions. The *First in the Family* web site makes all materials available as free downloads or in bulk at the publisher’s cost.

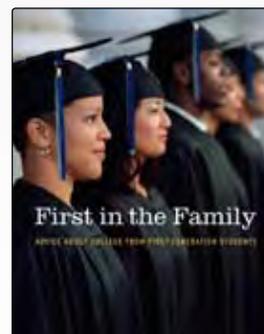
Toni Vakos

Editor

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National Issues Forums/
Kettering Foundation



First in the Family

For more information:

www.nifi.org
www.kettering.org

www.firstinthefamily.org
<http://www.nextgenerationpress.org/>
<http://www.whatkidscando.org/>

What's Happening at the National Resource Center

Publications

Career Development Monograph

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is developing a new monograph, edited by Paul Gore and Louisa Phinney, to highlight evidence-based programs and services designed to promote the career development of students in transition. We are soliciting proposals for cases to be included in this monograph representing a variety of transition points (e.g., pre-college, the first college year, sophomore year, junior year, senior year, and post-graduation). Proposals describing programs or services that promote the career development or preparation of students at any stage of education or transition will be considered. Submissions from postsecondary and secondary institutions of all types are invited.

Please visit www.nrc.fye.sc.edu/publications/cfp/ for proposal guidelines and to submit a proposal. Deadline for receipt of proposals is July 1, 2009. For more information, contact Paul Gore, volume editor, at Paul.Gore@utah.edu.

New Resource and Call for Contributions – Peer Educator Programs

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition has launched a new resource on our web site with a collection of research-based descriptions of peer educator programs. 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. Submissions are accepted twice each year: December 1 and June 1. Submissions received by December 1 will be posted to the web by April 15, and those received by June 1 will be posted to the web by October 15. 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.

Exploring the Evidence

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is pleased to make available the fourth volume of *Exploring the Evidence: Reporting Research on First-Year Seminars*, edited by Angela M. Griffin and Jonathan Romm.

Case studies on first-year seminars from 21 different colleges and universities are included in the collection and report on a variety of variables including course-specific learning outcomes, academic achievement, retention, student perceptions of and satisfaction with the seminar, and academic progress. Each case includes an overview of the institutional context and descriptions of the seminar, research methods, and findings.

Exploring the Evidence is available for download at <http://sc.edu/fye/resources/fyr/index.html>. The collection is available at no cost, but you will need Adobe Acrobat to download this resource.

E-Source Submission Guidelines

For complete guidelines and issue dates, see www.nrc.fye.sc.edu/eshource/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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Conferences

22nd International Conference on The First-Year Experience®

July 20-23, 2009 • Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Join educators from around the world as we explore approaches for enhancing the first-year experience for students. For more information on the conference, please visit www.sc.edu/fye/events/international.



Call for Proposals 16th National Conference on Students in Transitions

November 6-8, 2009 • Salt Lake City, Utah

The National Resource Center invites online proposal submissions. Concurrent session, roundtable discussion, poster session, and exhibitor presentation proposals are invited on topics addressing a wide range of student transitions. Proposals must be received by June 30, 2009. For more information on session types and submitting an online proposal, visit our web site at www.sc.edu/fye/events/sit/proposal/html.



Institute on First-Year Assessment Fellowships Co-Sponsored by AIR

October 10-12, 2009 • Charlotte, North Carolina

The National Resource Center, in collaboration with the Association for Institutional Research (AIR), is offering up to five fellowships that will cover the registration fee for the Institute on First-Year Assessment. To learn more or to apply for this fellowship, visit www.sc.edu/fye/events/AIRfellowships.htm or call (803)777-8158. The deadline for application is September 1, 2009.

Research

Sophomore-Year Initiative

The National Resource Center has completed data collection for the 2008 National Survey on Sophomore-Year Initiatives. A summary of the findings will be available on the web site in summer 2009.

Fidler Research Grant

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition invites applications for the 2009-10 Paul P. Fidler Research Grant. With a comprehensive award package, the Paul P. Fidler Research Grant promotes the development and dissemination of original research with the potential to have a national impact on college student success. Application materials are available at <http://www.sc.edu/fye/research/grant/proposal/>. Applications are due July 1, 2009.

Resource Development

New Graduate Student Listserv

The National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is pleased to announce a new initiative focusing on graduate student success. After publishing a monograph on graduate student transitions, the Center has created a listserv to provide faculty, staff, and students with an outlet to discuss strategies and programs designed to address the challenges students face as they transition into graduate school. To join this innovative listserv, please visit <http://listserv.sc.edu/archives/grad-list.html>.

For more information on Monograph 50, *Graduate Students in Transition: Assisting Students Through the First Year*, please visit <http://www.sc.edu/fye/publications/>.

Join NRC on Facebook

The National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is on Facebook. Visit our homepage at www.sc.edu/fye and click on the Facebook link in the left column to be directed to our Facebook page. Becoming a fan gives you unique access to a network of educators committed to student college success.