

## FYE Online – Making Two Transitions

**Student Success Seminar** - This elective course is designed to help new students transition from high school or work to the college environment. The seminar, which counts as two credit hours toward your degree, covers topics such as: Transitioning to the Campus Community, Developing Learning Skills, Building Academic Awareness, and Discovering The University of Akron (UA).

**The Transition to Online Learning** – In the past three years, there has been a 138% increase in the number of available Distance Learning (DL) courses AND a 110% increase in student enrollment in DL courses. Yet, attrition rates for classes taught DL are 10-20% higher than face-to-face classes. Four major strategies that may be used to decrease attrition in distance education courses are:

- Student integration & engagement
- Learning communities
- Learner centered approach
- Accessibility to online student services

**Online Pilot** – In the Fall 2008 semester the online section utilized Springboard (*Desire2Learn*; UA's course management system) and paralleled the face-to-face course in terms of content, learning objectives, and learning outcomes assessment. At the beginning of the term, 18 students were enrolled but 4 dropped before census day. Two face-to-face sections were used as 'control' sections for comparisons (one section taught by the same instructor and one section by another instructor).

### Survey of Interest in the Opportunity for an Online section of Student Success Seminar

#### Online      Turner      Hodges

**I expected this class to teach me various study skills.**

<i>True</i>	100%	80%	89%
<i>False</i>	0%	20%	11%

**I expected this class to tell me more about UA.**

<i>True</i>	67%	40%	89%
<i>False</i>	33%	60%	11%

**I expected this class to be easy.**

<i>True</i>	50%	80%	56%
<i>False</i>	50%	20%	44%

**This class is more difficult than my other classes this semester.**

<i>True</i>	17%	0%	22%
<i>False</i>	83%	100%	78%

**I have taken an online class before.**

<i>True</i>	0%	30%	0%
<i>False</i>	100%	70%	100%

**I think I would like an online class/I like this online class.**

<i>True</i>	67%	40%	67%
<i>False</i>	33%	60%	33%

**Would you have taken SSS online if you had known it was an option?**

<i>Yes</i>	NA	50%	44%
<i>No</i>	NA	50%	56%

#### **Why did you take this online course?**

- I work full time and thought this would be easier than having another class to drive to.
- I am a very busy person and it saves me the extra time going to campus.
- I wasn't aware that this was an online course. But I believe that this helps me better understand technology.
- Better for my schedule.
- My advisor signed me up.
- Easier and more flexible schedule.

#### **Why would you have taken it?**

- Easier to do (3)
- Wouldn't have to come to class (2)
- Because it would have been more convenient for me
- Would have been easier to get things done
- I could stay home more with my son
- It would have been more helpful
- To try something new
- No reason why

#### **Why would you NOT have taken it?**

- Because I hardly ever went online prior to attending UA
- I probably wouldn't of did as much because it deals with computers and I get side tracked
- I don't like online classes; I'm bad with computers
- Extreme procrastination
- Because I can understand the information better in person
- Because the in class experience is better so far
- I like when teachers teach
- I would do better with a real person to answer my questions
- In person is the way to go, life is impersonal enough
- Because I like being here in person

## End of Term Course Evaluation

This class improved my understanding of:

- 1 The general education requirement.
- 2 Academic Advising.
- 3 The registration process.
- 4 Faculty expectations of students.
- 5 Differences between high school and college.
- 6 The Student Code of Conduct.
- 7 Financial aid.
- 8 Campus resources.
- 9 Student organizations on campus.
- 10 UA's history.

This class improved my ability to:

- 11 Find my way around campus.
- 12 Send and receive e-mails from my UA e-mail account.
- 13 Use Springboard.
- 14 Manage my time effectively.
- 15 Establish priorities so I can accomplish my goals.
- 16 Take effective notes.
- 17 Prepare for tests and exams.
- 18 See multiple sides of issues.
- 19 Evaluate the quality of information.
- 20 Critically examine ideas and issues.
- 21 Manage and cope with stress.
- 22 Decide on a major or future career.
- 23 Succeed academically.
- 24 Adjust to college life.

This class increased the degree to which I:

- 25 Participated in campus sponsored events and activities.
- 26 Developed an appreciation of social and cultural diversity.
- 27 Discussed ideas with students with views different from my own.
- 28 Had interactions with students of a different race, ethnicity, religious or political background.
- 29 Met new people.
- 30 Establish close friendships.
- 31 Interacted with an academic adviser.
- 32 Took advantage of campus resources.
- 33 Feel connected to The University of Akron.
- 34 Feel able to meet the demands and expectations of college.
- 35 Made a successful transition to The University of Akron.

### Conclusions & Recommendations

- Overall, students who took Student Success Seminar in the online setting had similar outcomes to those students who took the class in the face-to-face format.
- Assignments online can be designed to parallel those in the face-to-face format.
- Special attention should be paid to creating online assignments that are engaging, help students make connections to each other, and provide structure for the discussion and exploration of diverse points of view.
- The importance of communication to advisors and students during orientation and enrollment regarding the availability and format of the online version of the course can not be overstated.

### References/Resources for Online Learning

- Angelino, L.; Williams, F.; Natvig, D. "Strategies to Engage Online Students and Reduce Attrition Rates" *The Journal of Educators Online*, 4:2, July 2007.
- Tyler-Smith, K. "Early attrition among first time eLearners: A review of factors that contribute to drop-out, withdrawal and non-completion rates of adult learners undertaking eLearning Programmes" *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 2:2, June 2006.
- Ludwig-Hardman, S. & Dunlap, J. "Learner support services of online students: Scaffolding for success" *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 4:1, April, 2003.