Providing Direction and Impacting Retention: GW's Guide to Personal Success (GPS) Program

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29th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience
Denver, Colorado
February 12-16, 2010
GW’s Guide to Personal Success

Program

Agenda

- Setting the Stage: GW Background
- Conception of GPS Program
- Implementation of GPS Program
- Program Logistics
- Trainings and Preparations
- Ongoing Support Network
- Tracking Trends and Information
- Moving Forward
- Questions and Answers
Setting the Stage: GW

Background

- GW Located in downtown Washington, DC
- 4 blocks from White House
- Competitive student body: 37% acceptance rate; over 65% from Top 10% of their class
- 1870-2090 average SAT score (math and verbal)
- Students from 50 states and over 125 foreign countries in the freshmen class
Conception of GPS Program

- 18 month assessment project of division of Student and Academic Support Services (2007-2008)
- Internal self-study combined with 13 site visits led to concept of freshmen class wide ‘mentoring’ program
- Transition to GW and Washington, DC: ‘dual’ transition has always been a challenge for students; GPS program responds to this
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University Collaboration and Input

- Vice Presidents & Staff Presentations
- Faculty and Associate Deans
- Student and Academic Support Services Senior Staff & Management
- Office of Alumni and Advancement
- Office of General Counsel
- Office of the Executive Vice President and Treasurer
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Student Collaboration and Input

- Student Focus Groups during 2007-2008 and 2008-2009
- Summer meetings with SA President Vishal Aswani
- Presentation to SA President’s Cabinet this summer
- Ongoing support and collaboration with President Vishal Aswani and Sophia Cahill, Director of Freshman Outreach
- Several Student Association Cabinet members serve as Guides
Implementation of GPS Program

- Incoming Class of 2013’s 2,550+ members were assigned to a University Guide at the beginning of the academic year.

- 600 Guides from across the University were paired up with freshmen in an approximate 1:5 ratio.

- Guides focus on social, personal, and experiential aspect of the student experience, thereby supporting the academic mission of the University.
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- All 2,550 incoming freshmen have been assigned a University Guide
- 600 Participating Guides:
  - Office of the President
  - Student and Academic Support Services
  - EVP&T
  - Government, International, and Community Relations
  - Human Resources
  - General Counsel
  - Communications
  - Alumni and Advancement
  - Academic Affairs
  - Young Alumni
  - Student Leaders
    *all students have a 3.0 cumulative GPA and are in excellent standing with the University, including judiciously.*
- Extensive training of Guides that spanned 3 days (*videotaped for future Guides*)
Program Logistics

- Combination of prescribed meetings for ‘touchpoints’ and informal gatherings and communications
- 1st meeting takes place within the first week of school to begin relationship, get acquainted, touch base on any first week difficulties, etc.
- Lunch in October paid for by University: Guides take out students individually as well as in groups to facilitate social interaction among new peers ($25 per student)
Program Logistics

- Third and final ‘prescribed’ meeting takes place after Thanksgiving break right before final exams to check in with student, see how they are doing, provide resources before finals if need be, etc

- 2 meetings during Spring semester expected, one when students return from Winter Break (discuss transition back, goals for 2nd semester, etc) and one after Spring Break and before final exams begin
Trainings and Preparations

- All Guides went through extensive three day summer training prior to beginning their Guide responsibilities.

- Core themes of training:
  - Psychosocial and Behavioral
  - Student Life and Engagement
  - Communication
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Psychosocial and Behavioral Training

- University Counseling Center (UCC) and QPR Training (Question, Persuade, Refer: working with students in distress). QPR Training provided through UCC Grant.

- Center for Alcohol and other Drug Education

- Office of Student Judicial Services

- University Police Department

- Registrar: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
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Student Life and Engagement

Training

- Student Activities Center
- Office of Community Service
- Colonial Central
- Greek Life
- GW Housing Programs
- Mount Vernon Campus
- Multicultural Student Services Center
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Communication

Training

How to begin relationship and conversation with GPS students

- What information gets shared and what doesn’t get shared

- FERPA and Privacy

- Online Student Interaction Form
Trainings and Preparations

- Mid Semester Training (Preparing Guides to work with freshmen transitioning to sophomores: study abroad, housing selection, internships/jobs/experiential learning, student leadership (Student Activities Center), and academic support resources (University Counseling Center and various departments))
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Academic Training and Collaboration

- 6/12/2008: Council of Deans presentation and individual meetings with representatives from each undergraduate school; ongoing communication with Deans

- Cross-School collaboration for Academic Training
  - Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
  - Elliott School of International Affairs
  - School of Business
  - School of Public Health and Health Sciences
  - School of Engineering and Applied Science

- Representatives from the Library, Registrar, Undergraduate Fellowships and Research, and the Writing Center also participated in training
Ongoing Support

- Weekly email listserve that educates all Guides about current trends, current events, and information impacting freshmen

- GPS website (gwired.gwu.edu/gps) contains important information, important dates and campus events, additional resources, and compilation of year-long documents and resources
Dear Students & Parents,
The George Washington University's Guide to Personal Success program was created to provide new GW undergraduate students with one single point of contact who can assist them with personal, professional, and experiential needs during their transition to campus. GPS Guides will support the resources of the various service departments across campus, working to help students learn to navigate the systems and support services of University life.

Welcome letter from Dr. Robert A. Chernak
Senior Vice President,
Student and Academic Support Services

Welcome letter from Brian F. Hamluk
Director,
University Guide to Personal Success Program

Guide Spotlight
Michael Akin
Michael Akin currently serves as the Director of Community Relations here at GW. He is a dedicated Colonial, having received both his bachelor's and master's degrees from GW. During his undergraduate career, he was very active on campus, serving on the Colonial Cabinet and immersing himself in the numerous service experiences. Now, he serves as a catalyst for GW's relationship with our Foggy Bottom/West End neighbors and the larger DC community.

FAQ of the Week
Q: What should I do if I have not heard from my Guide?
A: Contact the Guide to Personal Success office at GWGPS (202-994-9477) or gps@gwu.edu.
For more on this, click here.

Become a GPS Guide!
If you are a GW staff member and are interested in becoming a GPS Guide, please contact Brian Hamluk at 994-9477 or gps@gwu.edu

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At the conclusion of each interaction (meeting, lunch, coffee, phone call), Guides log interaction via online form at:

http://gwired.gwu.edu/gps/ForGuides/StudentInteractionForm/

- Personally identifiable student information is not required
- Our goal is to collect class-wide information about trends that are taking place and experiences with service areas on campus. This allows our campus service providers to respond to trends and improve the student experience.
Students with Difficulties

- If specific problems arise, Guides contact Director personally to discuss course of action
  - alcohol
  - suicide
  - Health
  - Academic
  - Finance
Out of the 7576 topics that were discussed during the Fall 2008 Semester, the percentage breakdown by topic is above.
Of the 2,316 topics regarding Student Involvement that were discussed during the Fall 2008 Semester, the percentage breakdown by topic is as follows:

- Joining a Student Organization: 32%
- Campus Events: 28%
- Greek Life: 16%
- Community Service: 10%
- MSSC: 1%
- Other Topics: 13%

This data provides a comprehensive overview of the discussions during the Fall 2008 Semester.
Of the 810 topics discussed regarding the Career Center that were discussed during the Fall 2008 Semester, the percentage breakdown by topic is above.

- Internships: 39%
- Work Study: 26%
- Programs: 5%
- FREE Programs: 10%
- Other Topics: 10%

G Work: 20%
Of the 714 topics discussed regarding GW Housing Programs that were discussed during the Fall 2008 Semester, the

- **Roommate Conflict**: 23%
- **Assignment Issues**: 12%
- **Facilities/Fix It**: 15%
- **RAC/LLC Involvement**: 11%
- **Other Topics (Sophomore Housing, House Dynamics, etc.)**: 39%
Of the 2075 topics discussed regarding Freshman Culture that were discussed during the Fall 2008 Semester, the percentage breakdown by topic is above.
Of the 1021 topics discussed regarding Academics that were discussed during the Fall 2008 Semester, the percentage breakdown by topic is above.
Moving Forward

- Intentional pairings for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} year (based on geography, undergraduate major, interests, etc)
- Expansion of Guide numbers in order to help reduce ratio from 1:5 to 1:4 in year 2 to 1:3 in Year 3 (Still remains the goal; on target to be accomplished with targeted incoming first-year class)
- Veterans and Transfer Students
I really clicked with my GPS advisor and I really think she will be a really useful source throughout college." - Freshman Morgan Haronian

"It's nice having someone who you can ask any question to." - Freshman Erika Strehl

“"It's nice knowing there's someone else working at GW who can help with all the other stuff besides strictly academics.” – Freshman Adam Katz
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Guide Testimonials

“I love the fact that I am staying connected to GW and giving back in this way. Very proud to be participating in this excellent program.” – 2007 GW Alumni David Henek

“I have really enjoyed being a part of the GPS Program and have gotten a real charge out of it.” – Jim Schrote, Director, Facilities Management
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Media Coverage

- University Press Release (April 21, 2008)
- GW Hatchet Article (June 13, 2008)
- GW Hatchet Editorial (June 13, 2008)
- GW BlogSpot (June 29, 2008)
- ByGeorge Article (September, 2008)
- GW Hatchet Article (September 18, 2008)
- Richmond Times Dispatch (October 8, 2008)
Providing Direction for First-Year Students: *GW's Guide to Personal Success (GPS)*

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