From Deposit To December...

A successful approach to the First Year Experience through the use of a unique, collaborative, co-curricular Peer Mentor program across five initiatives

Sarah E. Whitley
Director, First Year Experience
Longwood University
Our Goals...

- Creation of a seamless transition for new students that begins at deposit and carries through the first year
- Stronger focus on the overall success and holistic development of new students
- Streamline former office practices and develop a new Office of First Year Experience
- Provide a stronger developmental experience for Peer Mentors
- Retention!
Longwood University

- Farmville, VA...yes, it’s just like it sounds!
- Founded in 1839
- 4 year, public institution
- In state population
- 4,000 undergraduates; 1050 first year
- Deeply rooted in tradition
15 step general education program with required internship

Large population of incoming students = Undeclared

Academic Areas of Interest
- Liberal Studies/Elementary & Special Education
- Secondary Education
- Communication Studies
- Business & Economics
First Year Experience

- May 2007: A Renewal
- Where Do We Belong? Everywhere!
- Growing Pains
- Funding...what’s that?
- Collaboration is key!
Five Initiatives

- Summer Orientation & Registration
  - The 1839 Experience
- First Year Reading Experience
  - New Lancer Days
- Longwood Seminar
In addition...

- **Family Programs**
  - Parents Council & Association
  - Grants
  - Electronic Newsletter
  - Summer Send Offs

- **Transfer Student Services**

- **The Answer Book**

- **The Compass Community**
  - A living-learning experience for undeclared students

- **Student Coordinators**

- **Rock The Block**

- **University Opening Logistics**
The Stars of our Shows...

PEER MENTORS
Peer Mentors

- Formerly Orientation Leaders
- Approximately 55 on staff
  -one per Longwood Seminar section
- Average 150 applicants

Selection Process
- 2.5 GPA, Good Standing, one semester at LU
- Returners are not guaranteed rehire!
- 3 essays, 3 references, resume
- 2nd round interactive interview day for 80-100
Peer Mentor Training

- February Meeting & Contract Signing
- March One-Day Training
- April “1839” Overview – one evening
- May Summer Team Training
- August Full Team Training
  - New Lancer Days & Longwood Seminar
- Weekly Staff Meetings during Fall semester
Summer Team

- A resolution to summer issues!
- Approximately 26 on staff

Responsibilities:
- Summer Orientation & Registration
- The 1839 Experience
- First Year Reading Experience
- New Lancer Days
- Longwood Seminar

- $525 plus housing & meals for 3 weeks in Summer
- Additional Fall Team Compensation
Fall Team

- Allows for summer work, classes, travel
- Additional 30 team members

Responsibilities
- The 1839 Experience
- First Year Reading Experience
- New Lancer Days
- Longwood Seminar

Compensation
- $280 for New Lancer Days (4 days)
- $200 for Longwood Seminar (8 weeks)
Orientation & Registration

- Late May/Early June
- One Day Program
- 1-2 Transfer Sessions; 5-6 First Year Sessions
- Offerings for Students & Families

Program Content
- General Education
- Financial Services
- Residential & Commuter Life
- Dining Services
- Student Services
- Intro to First Year Reading
- Academic Advising & Course Registration
- Technology Support/Laptop Purchasing
- Transition for Families
- Student Rights/FERPA
First Year Reading Experience

- Committee Selected; Two Year Rotation
- Required Component of Longwood Seminar
- Introduced at O&R, Woven Into 1839
- Reading Guide
- Speaker During New Lancer Days
- Additional Programming & Course Integration
FYRE: Our Selections

2007-2009: Radical Simplicity

2010-2012: This I Believe II
The 1839 Experience:
Where Old Traditions Meet New Beginnings

- Piloted in Summer 2009
- Blackboard based; Participation by LSEM
- 10 weeks of content; self populates each Monday
- Weekly PM Email to introduce topics and open discussion boards

Content:
- Technology
- Academics & Academic Support
- First Year Reading
- Getting Involved
- Transitioning to College Life
- Living/Dining at LU
- New Lancer Days Preview
- Packing & Preparing to Leave Home
New Lancer Days
The First Four Days Of The Best Four Years Of Your Life!

- 4 day extended Orientation prior to the Fall semester
- MANDATORY participation
- Graded Component of Longwood Seminar
- Students participate with LSEM section

Content Overview
- Social Integration
- Personal/Campus Safety
- Diversity
- Sexual Assault/Awareness
- Alcohol & Drugs
- University Policy
- Health & Wellness
Longwood Seminar

- Director, Longwood Seminar
- Goal One of General Education; 1 credit
- Discipline based & Theme grouped
- Required for all first year students
- Five required components
- “Customizeable”
- 8 weeks/16 weeks
Benefits to New Students

- Consistency
- Personal Empowerment
- Provides LU more opportunities to assist
- Greater preparation prior to arrival
- Additional “group of friends”
- Upper class liaison
Benefits to Peer Mentors

- Leadership development
- Facilitation skills
- Crisis management
- Coping skills
- Networking
  - faculty, staff & administration
- Role modeling
- Compensation
- Resume Booster
Benefits to University

- Opportunity to identify at-risk students
- Increased student satisfaction
- Production of student leaders
- Preparation of student body
- Enrollment Management
- RETENTION!
COMMUNICATE
- President, Upper Level Administration, Department Chairs, LSEM Faculty, Student Affairs Staff...everyone!

INVolVEMENT
- Get your campus involved. Invite administrators/faculty/staff to assist or attend!

CREATE IMPORTANCE
- Let everyone know how important your programs are to the retention of students and overall student success. Brag whenever you can!
Contact Me!

Sarah E. Whitley
Director, First Year Experience
Longwood University

434.395.2414
whitleyse@longwood.edu
www.longwood.edu/newstudent