Engaging Faculty in Shaping Academic Expectations for First-Year Students

30th Annual Conference on the
First-Year Experience
Atlanta, Georgia
February 7, 2011

Overview

- The Challenge
- Institutional Context
- Conversations with Professors (CwP)
  - Background
  - Goals/Outcomes
  - Logistics and Pedagogy
  - Faculty Involvement
  - Assessment
- Discussion

The Challenge

First-Year Experience Vision

The First-Year Experience at Georgia Southern University will prepare students to become self-directed learners capable of authoring their own educational experiences.

Challenge and Support

- Our commitment
  - To meet students where they are <u>if</u> students are active in the process and willing to seek help.
- Commitment is both rationale for and content of CwP

Georgia Southern University

- 19,691 students in eight colleges
- 690-acre campus an hour west of Savannah
- Historically traditional, undergraduate population
- 33% racial minority
- Doctoral Research University

SACS Quality Enhancement Plan

- 2005
- Engagement
- Focus on first-year
  - Goal One: "Freshmen will apply behaviors that demonstrate their responsibilities as engaged learners."

Foundations of Excellence™

- Compared to benchmark institutions
  - Assessed favorably on outside-of-class dimensions
  - Assessed less favorably on cognitive dimensions
- Faculty ambivalence

FoE Student Survey

Prior to attending this University, to what degree did this institution accurately communicate academic expectations for students?

Accurately Convey Academic Expectations? (2005)

FYE Faculty Task Force

- Charge: Develop challenge/ support initiatives to improve the academic first-year experience.
  - Improve communication of academic expectations
  - Increase faculty buy-in
  - Extend beyond first semester
- Task Force composition

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First-Year Experience

Programmatic and Policy Recommendations

The recommendations of the Task Force fall into three areas: Curriculum, Expectations, and Intervention. In cases where the recommendation number ha link, click on it to read the supporting position paper describing the rationale and specifics. In cases where there is no link, consult the general grid of reco here (Excel document).

#	Curriculum	Spring 2007	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2008	Spring 2009
C-1	Transform GSU 1210 into two-hour First-Year Seminar with lab	Recruit faculty to pilot sections; develop information literacy, documentation and plagiarism modules	Offer 12-14 sections in pilot format; submit curriculum to Undergraduate Committee	Assess pilot sections; recruit faculty; commit to themes, integrate into SOAR sign-up	First classes	
C-2	Redirect IDS 2210 to become first-year Global Citizens course		Committee formed to propose learning outcomes	Curriculum committee revision	Recruitment of faculty	First classes
C-3	Offer faculty the option of teaching First-Year Seminar and Global Citizens course in-load (see papers for initiatives C-1 and C-2)	Build support at various levels; develop budgeting model to support initiative			Implement teaching in load	
C-4	Expand First-Year Interest groups		Solicit department, faculty participation in non-residential FIGs		Increase to 30% of entering class	e
C-5	Offer lecture series		Form committee to select book titles and lectures	Recruit/ train discussion facilitators		Begin program
		Spring 2007	Fall 2007	Spring 2008	Fall 2008	Spring 2009

Before Task Force

Recruitment

One-hour orientation course

Conveying Academic Expectations to First-Year Students

Summer Orientation

Academic advisement appointments

Matriculation

After Task Force

Recruitment

Expectations Brochure

Two-hour First-Year Seminar

Conveying Academic Expectations to First-Year Students

More time for academic advisors at Summer Orientation

Conversations with Professors

Academic advisement appointments

Matriculation

Expectations Brochure, 2010

Conversations with Professors

- 75-minute conversation led by a faculty member and an upper-class student
- Required for new students
- Sunday afternoon before classes begin on Monday
- Modeled after program at James Madison University

CwP Goals

- Academic welcome
- Prepare for the first week of classes
- Discuss & model positive faculty/student relationship
- Demonstrate that faculty care about students' success
- Answer questions

CwP Student Outcomes

Students will experience (through observation, participation and explicit discussion) appropriate classroom behaviors and ways of interacting with college faculty.

CwP Student Outcomes

Students will understand the importance of the college syllabus to their academic success and how to use the information contained in the syllabus.

CwP Student Outcomes

Students will create a final schedule before the last day of drop/add, and preferably before classes begin.

CwP logistics

- University enrolls students in FYE 1000 during orientation
- Sections cap at 30
- Sections organized by college
- 3:30-4:45 p.m.
- 103-108 sections each Fall since 2007

Student Assistants

- Faculty can select, or:
- FYE will provide with volunteers from Phi Eta Sigma, first-year honor society
- Wear T-shirts, direct traffic
- Answer questions, model positive relationships

CwP Pedagogy

- Varies
- Reference Expectations Brochure
- Resources at website contributed by Task Force, other Faculty
- Time for questions essential

Why do Faculty Buy-in?

- It's not the pay!
- Plays to faculty inclinations
  - College connection is important
- Does not require sustained commitment
- Advocacy of Faculty Task Force

General Assessment

- Faculty, student assistants
  - Value program
  - Keep Sunday
- Faculty value student assistants
- High attendance, although:
  - Many students are late
  - End up being adopted by other faculty
  - T-shirt idea
- Non-attendees do less well (despite follow up)

Student Responses, 2010

- CwP helped me understand who professors are and what they do.
  - 84.3% Strongly Agree/Agree
- CwP helped me understand how I should interact with faculty.
  - 87.2% Strongly Agree/Agree

Student Responses, 2010

- After attending CwP, I understood the importance of the syllabus in being successful in my classes at Georgia Southern.
  - 91.1% Strongly Agree/Agree
- CwP helped me know what to look for in a syllabus.
  - 79.6% Strongly Agree/Agree

Student Responses, 2010

After Conversations with Professors (CwP), I understood the importance of making schedule changes no later than the fourth day of classes.

- 87.2% Strongly Agree/Agree

Accurately Convey Academic Expectations?

Withdrawal Rate, First-Year Students

- 2006: 10.5%
- 2007: 8.0%
  (first year of CwP)
- 2008: 7.6%
- 2009: 5.9%
  (new policy in effect)
- 2010: 5.0%

FYE Faculty Task Force

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  - Improve communication of academic expectations
  - Increase faculty buy-in
  - Extend beyond first semester

The Benefits of Faculty Buy-In

January 27, 2011:

Chris: I plan to apply to teach at least Fall 2011 FYE, but I'm particularly interested in the Global Citizens initiative. What do I need to do to be considered for that program? Also, when will you start recruiting for Summer and Fall "Meet the Faculty?" I think that's one of the best programs we have for the incoming students.

Discussion

- What works to promote accurate communication of academic expectations on your campuses?
- How can universities best improve?

Continue the Conversation!

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