Bridging the First-Year Experience Through Student Leadership Roles

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Cabrini College

- Small, Catholic, Liberal Arts college outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Undergraduate population of approximately 1400 students
- Comprehensive First-Year Experience
  - Beginnings – Summer Orientation
  - New Student Orientation
  - Pre-Orientation Experiences
  - Learning Community Program (Both LLCs and LCs)
  - Peer Mentor Program
  - Engagements with the Common Good Writing Curriculum
- Close connection between Faculty and Student Engagement – Bridge between AA and SD
Pre-Fall of 2007

» Minimal Academic Support Services

» Absence of coordinated first-year experiences

» Lack of leadership development opportunities (LEADStrong)

» Recruiting larger classes; poor retention rates (mid-60s)

» Support from the Dean for Academic Affairs on securing Title III grant and developing specific initiatives
Title III Grant

• Living and Learning Communities

• Center for Teaching and Learning

• Development of a First-Year Experience Steering Committee
First-Year Experience Student Leaders

• Peer Mentors
• Orientation Leaders
• Master Learners
• Resident Assistants
• Classroom Coaches
• Peer Tutors
First-Year Experience Timeline

Living & Learning Communities (LLCs)
- College 101 & Peer Mentor Program
- ECG 100 (half the class)
- ECG 100 (half the class)

CabriniVision
- Accepted Students Day
- Summer Orientation
- New Student Orientation
- Leadership Workshop
- Pre-Orientation

APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUG. | SEP. | OCT. | NOV. | DEC. | JAN. | FEB. | MARCH | APRIL | MAY
Beginnings

- Summer Orientation for all first-year students
- Introduction to the first-year summer reading
- Completion of placement exams
- Overview of the College’s core curriculum
- Opportunity to connect with faculty/staff
- Promotion of Learning Communities and Pre-Orientation Experiences

- **Peer Mentors** play a pivotal role in the structure and fluidity of this program
Summer Communication

- Learning Community Acceptance letters are sent out to students in July welcoming them to their learning community (if they applied into one)

- This is an introduction to the Faculty and Master Learner - upperclass mentor/tutor - and Resident Assistant first-year students will be working with through the academic year

- Co-Curricular Opportunities are highlighted here
New Student Orientation

Orientation Leaders:

• Orientation Leaders work in pairs to help new students transition to college life and Cabrini in particular

• Master Learners (MLs) are required to serve as Orientation Leaders (OLs) and participate in all training activities

• Master Learners then serve as Orientation Leader for their LC/LLC with another OL not affiliated with LC/LLC

• All other OLs are assigned to affiliated groups, where possible

• Virtual presence of OLs and Master Learners prior to August Orientation

• Growth of the OL position
Residence Life

Resident Assistants (RAs):
• Residence Life sends list of selected RAs to Director of FYE

• Intentional placement of RAs in LLC communities they participated in as first-year students

• RAs assist in promoting the theme of the LLC through programming initiatives and in consultation with Master Learner

• RAs hold their first building and floor meetings during the August Orientation program, so they connect early with students

• Residence Life partners with the Orientation team to encourage attendance at all August Orientation programs
Learning Community Program

Master Learner

– Lives on the LLC Residence Hall and collaborates with the Resident Assistant (RA)
– Model behavior and habits of mind of engaged students
– Academic mentor/tutor to LC students
– Encourage and engage FY students to connect across campus through a variety of leadership opportunities
– Partner with LC faculty to build and offer an integrative curriculum that includes co-curricular programming.
– Shape the ideas presented in and across connected courses.
Peer Mentor Program

• Peer Mentor
  – Team teaches a one-credit college success seminar alongside a faculty member
  – Directly connected with the college’s LCs
  – Works in partnership with the Master Learner to offer LC students a seamless FYE
  – Co-facilitates dialogue pertaining to topics that include academic honesty, the college’s core curriculum, financial literacy, and major and career exploration
Center for Teaching and Learning

Classroom Coaches/Peer Tutors

– Collaborate directly with Master Learners and Peer Mentors
– Equivalent to a teaching assistant in the classroom for one, 3-credit course
– Provide academic support via supplemental instruction and one on one tutoring
– Communicate with Faculty, Master Learners, and Peer Mentors regarding potential at-risk students
## Retention

### Table I-C: First-Time, Full-Time Student Cohort Retention Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Fall to Fall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011(^7)</td>
<td>338/337</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012(^8)</td>
<td>325/322</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013(^9)</td>
<td>383/382</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next Steps

• Increase of High Impact Practices (especially LCs)
• The Cabrini Promise is that by 2020:
  • 100 percent of undergraduate students will have participated in a learning community
  • 100 percent of undergraduate students will have experienced two or more High-Impact Educational Practices in their first year.
  • LCs, Undergraduate Research, Diversity/Global Learning, Service Learning/Community-Based Learning, Internships,
• By graduation, all of our students will have experienced four or more of these practices

Presidential Inauguration of Donald B. Taylor, Ph.D.
October 25, 2014