Developing a Successful First-Year Experience Course for Transfer Students

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Transfer Student Data

- 41% of students who earned a bachelor's degree attended at least 5 semesters at a community college (Handel, 2013).
- 60% attended at least 3 semesters (Handel, 2013).
- Transfer students drop out at higher rates and have lower GPAs compared to traditional students (Hoyt & Winn, 2004).
- At UM, approximately 22% of transfer students go on academic probation after their first semester.

First Year Experience at UM
EDHE 105

- First-year seminar first taught in 1963.
- Offered as a 3-credit hour course since fall 2009 (29 sections).
- 127 sections in fall 2016.
- Freshman-Year Experience course is currently taught in the fall, spring and summer.
- *The Ole Miss Experience* textbook: created by UM professors and administrators.
- Taught by UM faculty and staff.

Content of the Course

- University history and traditions
- Time management and study skills
- Stress management
- Budgeting and money management
- Healthy relationships and violence prevention
- Diversity and inclusion
- University creed and civility
- University resources
- Career development and major selection

Requirements of the Course

- Event attendance (cultural, social, sporting, etc.)
- Meetings with the instructor
- Meetings with the faculty
- MBTI
- Career project
- Common reading project

Programming Associated with the Course

- Library Orientation
- Active Shooter Response Training
- Fall Convocation and class coin distribution
- Common Reading
- Rebel Run
- Creed Week

Successes

- **Increased freshman retention rates**

2013	n=3564				
	Exempt	Not Retained	Retained	Total	Retention Rate
EDHE 105	2	318	1702	2022	84.26%
no EDHE 105	2	219	964	1185	81.49%

2014	n=3762				
	Exempt	Not Retained	Retained	Total	Retention Rate
EDHE 105	7	326	2047	2380	86.26%
no EDHE 105	4	165	842	1011	83.61%

2015	n=3904				
	Exempt	Not Retained	Retained	Total	Retention Rate
EDHE 105	4	382	2249	2635	85.48%
no EDHE 105	6	173	689	868	79.93%

Adapting EDHE 105 into a Transfer Year Experience course

- SWOT Analysis

  Strengths: Proven model for freshmen, framework, institutional support

  Weaknesses: Funding, staffing, student interest

  Opportunities: Emerging trend, increase student success

  Threats: What if it doesn't work? How will it impact EDHE 105?

EDHE 305

- Transfer Task Force created to recognize the needs of transfer students
- Recommendations of the Task Force
- First offered in the Fall 2014
- Stipend offered to instructor
- Instructor characteristics

Carryover Content

- First-Year Experience Textbook is used
- Time Management and Study Skills
- University History and Traditions
- Library Resources
- Wellness Topics
- Financial Literacy

EDHE 305 Specific Content

- Transfer Experience Supplement
  - Making the transition to the University of Mississippi
  - Learn the language of Ole Miss
  - Advising and graduation
  - Life in Oxford
  - Get involved on campus
  - Resumes, graduate school and career preparation

EDHE 305 Statistics

	2015-16 EDHE 305	2015-16 Non-EDHE 305	2014-15 EDHE 305	2014-15 Non-EDHE 305
Number of Students	321	974	182	997
% Resident	81.3%	87.2%	84.6%	85.4%
% Non-Resident	18.7%	12.8%	15.4%	14.6%
% Probation	18.4%	21.5%	19.2%	25.4%
% Suspended		0.3%		0.2%
Average Course GPA	3.48	NA	3.50	NA
Average Semester GPA with Course	2.70	NA	2.75	NA
Average Semester GPA without Course	2.47	2.69	2.56	2.61
% Returned Spring (10th class day)	93.1%	91.4%	92.9%	90.5%
% Returned Fall (10th class day)			83.0%	78.8%

New Developments

- Targeting at-risk students
- 1 hour follow up course
- EDHE 303 – Academic Skills for Transfer Students (on probation)

How can Libraries help?

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Libraries and Student Success

- Library Use and Retention
  - Soria, K., Fransen, J., & Nackerud, S. (2013). Library use and undergraduate student outcomes: New evidence for students' retention and academic success. portal: Libraries and the Academy, 13(2), 147-164.
    - First-year students who used the library in the Fall semester saw an increase in semester GPA and higher retention rates to the spring semester (p. 160).

Libraries and Student Success

- Murray, A., Ireland, A., & Hackathorn, J. (2016). The value of academic libraries: Library services as a predictor of student retention. College & Research Libraries, 77(5), 631-642.
  - “Using the academic library for any reason was a significant positive predictor of retention for all of the students in the population” (p. 639)

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Libraries and Student Success

- Library Use and GPA
  - Allison, D. (2015). Measuring the impact of libraries. portal: Libraries and the Academy, 15(1), 29-40.

    - Correlation between library use and GPA (p. 38)
    - "library use is lower among the students who leave the university in the freshman through junior years. Because library use is correlated with student retention, libraries' should participate in university programs that target at-risk students to help them improve their grades, which can aid efforts for retention at the university" (p. 38).

Libraries and Student Success

- Bowles-Terry, M. (2012). Library instruction and academic success: A mixed-methods assessment of a library instruction program. Evidence Based Library and Information Practice, 7(1), 82-95.
  - "a significant relationship between upper-division information literacy instruction and GPA at graduation" (p. 89)
  - Transfer students involved in the study indicated the need for a library orientation (p. 89)

What Might Increase Library Use and Student Success?

- Exposure
  - Scaffolded library instruction
    - Instruction targeted at pivotal courses throughout a student's program of study
    - Vary by program of study
    - Learning objectives become more advanced as students progress in program and objectives of courses
    - Freshman transitions and Freshman Writing Compositions classes are considered the foundation of the scaffold
    - Without a dedicated Transfer Orientation class, transfer students can experience disparities in knowledge base
    - Transfer transitions would have a dedicated place in the scaffold

What Might Increase Library Use and Student Success?

- Personal Connections
  - Participation in Student Success Seminar
    - Supplementary program of study integrated into Freshman Transitions classes (not campus wide yet)
    - Faculty and Staff from influential departments and programs were invited to co-teach the SSS. (MSU does not have a dedicated single entity for all Student Success Initiatives)
    - Librarians were a great fit in this role
      - No course releases
      - Constant role throughout academic career
    - Would fit just as easily into Transfer Student Transitions classes

Lessons We Have Learned

- A FYE course for freshmen can be modified to support new transfer students
- Data collection and assessment are critical in gaining support and revising the course to meet the need of today's students in transition.
- You don't know if you don't try!

Questions?

References

Handel, S. J. (2013). The transfer moment: The pivotal partnership between community colleges and Four-Year institutions in securing the nation's college completion agenda. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2013*(162), 5-15.

Hoyt, J. E., & Winn, B. A. (2004). Understanding retention and college student bodies: Differences between drop-outs, stop-outs, opt-outs, and transfer-outs. *NASPA Journal, 41*(3), 395.