

What We Say Matters:
Students in Transition, Costa Mesa, CA

The Impact of Language on Transitions

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Our Discussion Today

- The impetus for the research
- Review of the Qualitative Inductive Analysis
- Explanation of the Themes
- Implications, Relevance, Recommendations
- Inspiration

POST-IT NOTES to write words/phrases

Things I Was Hearing

- "Students these days are so entitled..."
- "When students get into the real world..."
- "Students don't read/Students don't do what we tell them to do..."

Things I Was Learning

- As First-Year College students, individuals often don't understand the WHY of college
- First-Year Student adjustment is related to new expectations
- Today's overburdened generations of students are often paralyzed by choice/framework

Communication and The First-Year

To Improve Student Success, a University Confronts the Email Deluge

I

What Message

Does This

Send To

Students?

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
By Brooke Hansen | October 20, 2016

Supina, B. (2016, October 20). To Improve Student Success, a University Confronts the Email Deluge. The Chronicle for Higher Education 63(3), p. A10.

KSU Overview

- Located in Kennesaw and Marietta, Georgia
- Serving 35,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs in-person and online
- Rolling admission model through Spring 2018
- Over 5,000 incoming first-year students
- Carnegie classification: R3

Reputation for serving First-Year Students

- 13 years ranked as one of US News & World Report's best first-year experiences
- In 2010, First-Year and Transition Studies received the University System of Georgia Program Excellence Award, the system's highest honor
- In 2015 the institution launched the first-ever Master's degree with an emphasis in First-Year Studies

- Mandatory First-Year Seminar for students with under 15 credit hours
- Learning Communities
- First-Year Orientation is required
- Extended Orientation available



A Tool to Measure Empowerment

Blending Maryellen Weimer's strategies for empowering students in the classroom and Michel Foucault's perspectives on empowerment language:

Rubric for Evaluating Language in Communications to Incoming FY Students



Themes

1. Language Balance is found through articulation of the meaning of the terms as related to the student;



Research Questions

1. What are the communication pieces, what do they say, who is responsible for creating and delivering the message, and on what time line?
2. Is the institution creating a relationship via the communications they send to first-year students?
3. Is the institution using language meant to include first-year students in discourse?
4. Is the institution communicating with first-year students in ways that empower them to be successful?



Analysis

10 Categories on the Rubric

- Audience appropriate language
- Communication intent is clear
- Language choice
- Language balance
- Timing
- Discourse
- Communication experience
- Language provides choice
- Language invokes participation
- Language provides motivation

Recurring Words and Phrases

- Counted and charted for frequency
- Reviewed for consistency in definitions
- Reviewed for recurring messages



Themes

2. Ignoring timing and refusing further discourse builds process over relationship;



Themes



3. Word choice matters within each document and influences the interpretation of other documents;



Themes

4. When choice includes participation and motivation the opportunity exists for empowerment to thrive.



Themes

5. Emerging theme: communication experience matters;



Communication Experience

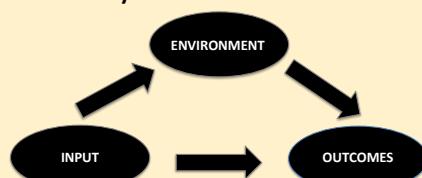


Implications

- The validated rubric can be used to craft empowering messages
- The validated rubric can be used to design intentional communication experiences
- Another motivator to work across institutional divisions to agree on language choices
- Institutional cultural shifts toward empowerment



Why Does it Matter?



Astin's I-E-O Model (1993)



Recommendations

- Communication Task Force
- Word Matrices and Institutional Lexicons
- First-Year Student
- Motivate students through decision making
- Innovate experiences with technology
- Build relationships with students
- Define the environment and the student within it using language balance



What Can You Do?



What If...

Intentional word choices could directly impact the successful transition of students



Questions?

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Thank you! Safe travels!

