

What We Say Matters:

Students in Transition, Costa Mesa, CA

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The Impact of
Language
on Transitions



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

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Special
To Improve Student Success, a University Confronts the Email Deluge

By Brooke Szymanski
In the digital age of 2015, most students have grown up with smartphones and tablets. They are constantly connected to the internet. This has led to a deluge of email, text messages, and social media notifications. For many students, this constant connectivity is a double-edged sword. While it allows them to stay connected with friends and family, it also distracts them from their studies. At Kennesaw State University, the problem is particularly acute. With over 35,000 students, the university receives a massive volume of email. Many of these emails are from students who are struggling with their coursework. They are asking for help, but they are often overwhelmed by the sheer volume of email they receive. The university's IT department has implemented a number of strategies to help reduce the email deluge. These include creating a central email inbox for all university-related communication, implementing a strict email policy, and providing training to students on how to manage their email. The university is committed to providing a high-quality education, and it is essential that students are able to focus on their studies without being overwhelmed by a constant stream of email.



Supreni, B. (2016, October 20). To Improve Student Success, a University Confronts the Email Deluge. *The Chronicle for Higher Education* (K16), p. A32.



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



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?



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



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

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



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.

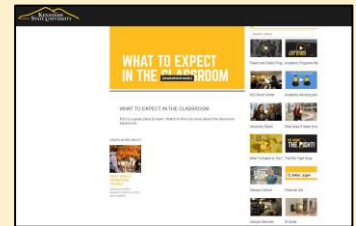


Themes

5. Emerging theme: communication experience matters;



Communication Experience

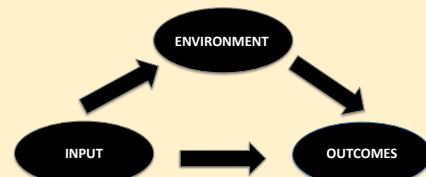


Implications

- 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...



Questions?

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Thank you! Safe travels!

