CONTENTS

Redesigning the Library Scavenger Hunt for First-Year Seminar Students

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Peruse an article in a library journal on using scavenger hunts for new students, and there is a good chance it does not put the activity in a favorable light. In their article, "Library Scavenger Hunts: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," Rugan and Nero (2013) share numerous examples of scavenger hunt questions or tasks that range from busywork to downright weird. Several common problems repeatedly arise with library scavenger hunts.

First, they can quickly become dated, as library services and resources move and change constantly, and it is difficult to stay current on the revisions to library spaces and online resources. Second, they can burden library staff unnecessarily. While asking students to interact with staff can have benefits, it is equally important to ensure the interaction connects with a meaningful learning outcome. Having a student ask a library employee mundane questions in order to check off a box signifying completion of a task, for example, is unlikely to give the student valuable information about library staff or services; it simply pulls the librarian away from more meaningful work.

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Finally, questions or tasks that move students through a library space, but do not ask them to *do* anything meaningful within that space, seem like a waste of time. Often, these students do not actually learn the necessary skills to use library services successfully in the future. Rugan and Nero (2013) give one example of a hunt that asked students to identify the color of the binding of a particular journal run. While it did ask students to navigate the physical library, it did not give them knowledge of the journal's content or usefulness.

Library scavenger hunts have seen a resurgence in recent years, however, thanks in large part to the availability and affordability of new technology and the proliferation of smartphones (Goldman, Turnbow, Roth, Friedman, & Heskett, 2016; Pike & Alpi, 2007). At Oklahoma State University (OSU), librarians who work with undergraduates were looking for a way to reach large numbers of first-year students with meaningful learning experiences without a significant added burden on instruction librarians or access services staff. To do this, the librarians designed and implemented a self-directed, mobile-friendly scavenger hunt for use in first-year seminars.

Several parameters were considered before building the activity. The first-year seminars at OSU are decentralized and housed within individual colleges; therefore, they do not share a common curriculum across the disciplines. Also, none of the seminars include a required library component. Finally, OSU welcomes about 4,500 new students each year, and with only one dedicated first-year librarian, providing an option for every single student to meet with a librarian was not feasible. The scavenger hunt was designed to mitigate these conditions, as well as address the common problems that arise with such an activity.

Engaging Students on a Meaningful Level

To ensure every question or task was designed as a learning opportunity, we connected our questions and answers to learning outcomes developed for our first-year orientation program. For example, students should be able to identify what library services and resources are available and how to access and use them. Other outcomes include

- navigating the physical and virtual spaces of the library;

- identifying when and why they should use library/other academic resources versus using a generic open web search;

- identifying librarians and subject guides that may be relevant to their interests and majors; and

- using the Discovery Search (BOSS) and a general database (e.g., Academic Search Premier) to find and use books, articles, and other resources on a given topic.

The design process helped ensure we were asking students only to do tasks that let them engage with the library on a meaningful level while completing the hunt. We also removed any questions that required students to speak with a staff member. Some tasks did encourage students to ask for assistance and gave directions on finding library staff, but all the questions could be answered without staff help. This ensured the activity did not create long lines at the main information and circulation desk, allowing staff to better handle the already large beginning-of-semester crowds. Finally, we sought to make the hunt fun and engaging by asking students to do something they likely already enjoy: taking pictures. The activity could be completed on a mobile device, and two questions asked students to visit a specific space or location and upload a selfie to the hunt software. We opted for a survey-building software (Qualtrics) that included a responsive, mobile-friendly interface and allowed for photo uploads.

> "Library scavenger hunts have seen a resurgence in recent years … thanks in large part to the availability and affordability of new technology and the proliferation of smartphones."

The scavenger hunt was implemented beginning in fall 2016 and could be accessed using a publicly available guide maintained by the library. It was available to all first-year seminar faculty, and instructors could choose whether to use the hunt in their courses. A combined 14 sections of first-year seminars did so, representing three colleges: Arts and Sciences, Education, and Engineering. While the activity was not required of all incoming students, any instructor who used it required students to complete it as part of their course grade.

Assessment

At semester's end, librarians assessed the activity's use and impact. Students submitted 976 completed scavenger hunts, and because some completed it in groups, the activity reached a total of 1,302 students. Also, instructors for the participating classes were given an optional short survey to rate their experience using the hunt. Ten instructors completed the survey, and their response was extremely positive: 100% indicated interest in using it again in the future, and 90% felt it helped their students become more familiar with library resources.

Photo source: Depositphotos.com

A selection of questions from the hunt were assessed to determine whether students were able to find the correct answers. Some questions were easily quantified as yes or no responses. The question answered correctly most often asked students to visit one of three available study rooms in the library. Once there, they entered an alpha-numeric validation code from a sign on the study room's door. Students successfully identified at least one way to reserve the space 99% of the time.

Other questions were more qualitative and were coded into broad categories for the assessment. For example, students were given a library webpage explaining databases and peer-reviewed articles. After examining the page, they were asked to explain when and why they would choose library resources over Google. Students' responses included words or phrases related to source reliability, trustworthiness, and/or credibility 58% of the time overall.

What We Learned

Perhaps one of the most useful points gained through the assessment came regarding library anxiety in first-year students. It is well documented that unfamiliarity with an academic library and its services can be a barrier to students seeking help and resources (Black, 2016). Therefore, increasing their familiarity with the library's physical

> *"The design process helped ensure we were asking students only to do tasks that let them engage with the library on a meaningful level while completing the hunt."*

and virtual resources was a key goal for this activity. Students were asked to rate their comfort level with the library before and after completing the hunt. Only 10% rated themselves as *extremely comfortable* before the activity; however, 53% did so afterward.

Other findings from the assessment revealed student barriers to accessing services and resources, as well as ways the activity could be improved to better encourage future learning. For example, one question asked, "Where can you find textbooks and reserves in the library?" This query was intended to point students to the physical location of these items, i.e., the library's Creative Studios or Room 105. While the majority of students answered correctly (73%), this question also garnered the highest percentage of incorrect responses (27%). Of those answering incorrectly, most said textbooks and reserves could be found by searching the library catalog. While not technically wrong, as these items are searchable in the catalog, the students could not identify their physical library location. Reflecting on the assessment findings, librarians determined the fault in this question lay in the question design, as it was perhaps too vaguely worded for some students.

By overseeing the scavenger hunt's implementation and maintenance, librarians ensured the content was relevant and up to date, and that each piece of the hunt was mapped to first-year orientation outcomes, therefore addressing common problems with this type of activity. Because the hunt was mobile-friendly and self-directed, large numbers of students could be reached without a significant burden on librarians and staff. Going forward, librarians plan to revise the activity and offer it to first-year seminar courses again in fall 2017.

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Revising Extended-Orientation Seminar to Meet the Needs of New Students

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The University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) offers nearly 30 first-year seminars for new students during their first semester, including residential learning community seminars, first-year interest groups, school/college seminars, and extended-orientation seminars. The largest extended-orientation first-year seminar open to all new students is the Wisconsin Experience Seminar (WES), a one-credit, graded, elective course co-taught by a university faculty or staff member and Undergraduate Teaching Fellow (Fellow). Launched in 2006, the course supports new students' academic, personal, and social transition to the university. Through various institutional and leadership changes, its content and structure shifted over time, often based on the interests of staff and responding to demands for rigor over the needs of new students.

In fall 2015, UW-Madison's Center for the First-Year Experience (CFYE) began a course review process to ensure the WES was meeting new students' needs. CFYE staff conducted interviews and focus groups with current instructors, Fellows, students, and campus partners to learn about their experiences with the course. They also reviewed institutional data on enrollment, student satisfaction, and retention and graduation rates. Initial findings indicated significant institutional confusion about WES course goals and learning outcomes, as well as student and instructor dissatisfaction with course workload (i.e., readings and assignments). The review also found that the retention rate differential between students who took the course and those who did not had closed. Therefore, a holistic reconsideration of the seminar was required to align it with student and university expectations of a one-credit elective and to ensure that instructors and Fellows could foster a positive experience for new students.

Resetting Expectations

CFYE staff used Friedman's (2012) steps in a course review process as a guide:

1. Appoint a committee.
2. Learn about the students.
3. Identify and prioritize seminar goals and content.
4. Develop learning outcomes.
5. Map outcomes to the curriculum.
6. Identify needs for faculty development.
7. Develop a plan to measure outcomes. (pp. 78-81)

To that end, we appointed a committee of current and past WES instructors, Fellows, students, and relevant campus partners to meet regularly and recommend ways to improve the course. Committee members were selected for their experience and interest in the course, expertise on campus, and diverse ideas and perspectives. The first meeting highlighted data on new students at UW-Madison and the profile of students

who typically take the WES, and participants discussed common challenges that new students face and faculty and staff observe.

These data helped inform a new student-needs activity, conducted with groups of current instructors, Fellows, and students, and then again with the Course Review Committee. Participants brainstormed needs of new students at UW-Madison that the WES could address, wrote the ideas on Post-it notes, and stuck them on a wall. Facilitators identified themes and organized those notes into clusters. Then, participants placed green dots on *must include* theme clusters and red dots on theme clusters considered beyond the scope of the course, duplicated in other venues, or not as important for new students to address in their first semester.

The results of this process were compiled, synthesized, and shared with the committee to help develop the revised course learning outcomes. This took a number of meetings, as the committee worked to design outcomes that were relevant to new students, developmentally appropriate, achievable within the scope of the course, and operationalized for assessment.

The committee used backward design principles (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) in revising the course. That is, they began with what the committee wanted students to know, think, and do after taking the course (i.e., learning outcomes) and then developed recommended assessments of student learning to align with those outcomes. From there, the committee recommended readings and lesson plans to engage students and help them complete the assessments and achieve the course learning outcomes. With these recommendations, CFYE staff formed subcommittees of campus experts and instructors to design course content related to major and career exploration, identity and social justice, and library resources and research. Staff then participated in a four-day retreat to synthesize all the recommendations, align course assessments and content with the course learning outcomes, and ensure the workload was appropriate for a one-credit course. The result was a recommended course syllabus that was developmentally appropriate, aligned with new students' needs, and intentionally designed for student learning and engagement.

Putting a Plan Into Action

The next step in the process was designing a development plan for faculty and Fellows. CFYE staff chose the University 101 Instructor Development Plan from the University of South Carolina (Friedman, Clarke, & Strickland, 2016) as a model to ensure instructors received the information they needed, when they needed it, and when they were ready to hear it (see Figure 1). In addition to designing an intentional development and support plan, the staff overhauled the WES Wiki, which includes readings, activities, lesson plans, and resources for teaching the course, to align with the new curriculum. The final step was designing a course evaluation that included questions about student satisfaction, aligned with previous years' instruments for longitudinal data collection, and incorporated learning-outcome questions to measure student learning indirectly. A standing focus group of students gave additional meaningful feedback during the fall 2016 semester.

> "Participants brainstormed needs of new students at UW-Madison that the WES could address, wrote the ideas on Post-it notes, and stuck them on a wall."
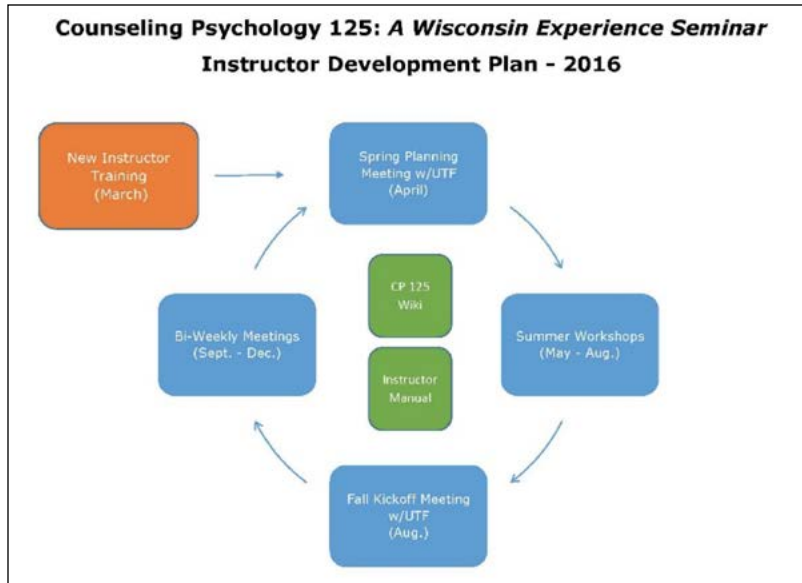
Figure 1. Wisconsin Experience Seminar Instructor Development Plan.

Getting a Positive Response

Information on changes to the course was shared widely with advisors, peer advisors, and orientation staff through e-mails, individual meetings, and marketing materials, leading to greater institutional investment and student interest—and a 22.6% increase in student enrollment from fall 2015 ($n = 328$) to fall 2016 ($n = 402$). This increase was coupled with significant improvement in student satisfaction as reported through the course evaluation. Among students completing the course evaluation in fall 2016, 86% ($M = 4.29$) of students agreed or strongly agreed that taking the WES was a valuable experience in 2016, up from 63.3% ($M = 3.64$) in 2015 (see Figure 2). Students were also more likely to report the course was relevant and helpful in their adjustment to college. In addition, students who took the course in fall 2016 earned a first-semester GPA of 3.34, up from 3.25 in fall 2015 and higher than the 3.27 for students not enrolled in the course in fall 2016.

Instructors were also more satisfied with the experience. Half of fall 2016 instructors requested to teach it again in fall 2017 (an increase from 21% of fall 2015 instructors), and applications to teach increased from 27 for fall 2016 to 41 for fall 2017. Fellows also reported high levels of satisfaction: 94.4% *($M = 4.72$)* of fall 2016 Fellows agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed teaching the WES, and 100% ($M = 4.89$) agreed or strongly agreed that teaching the WES was a valuable experience.

> *"*Information on changes to the course was shared widely with advisors, peer advisors, and orientation staff … leading to greater institutional investment and student interest.*"*
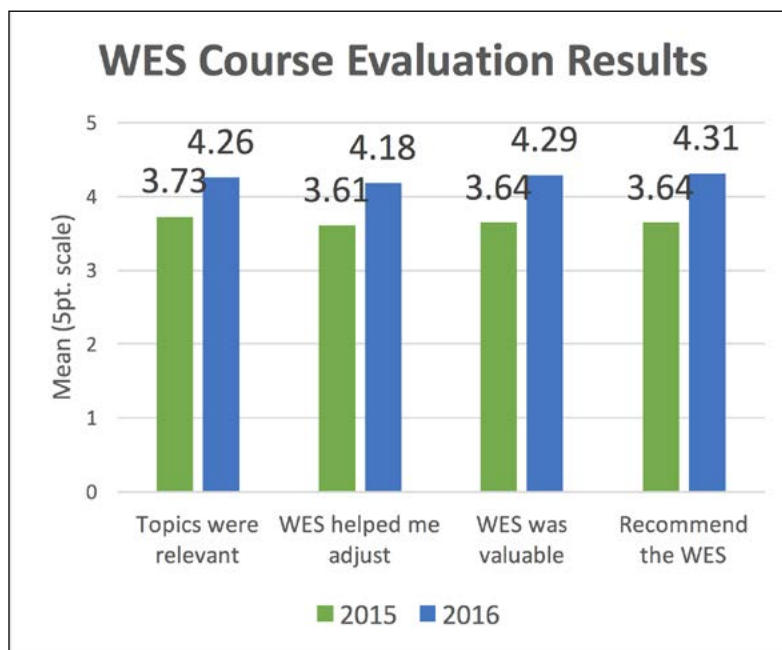
WES Course Evaluation Results

Figure 2. Wisconsin Experience Seminar course evaluation results (2015-2016).

Recommendations for the Future

While data from the course evaluation and instructor/Fellow survey showed positive trends based on changes made after the course review process, there is still more work to be done. A Curriculum Review Committee met in January 2017 to study the course evaluation and instructor/Fellow survey results and make recommendations. CFYE staff are meeting with top-performing instructors, based on course evaluations, to revise recommended lesson plans, assignments, and the instructor/Fellow development process. In fall 2017, the same course evaluation instrument will be used to collect longitudinal data on student self-reported learning, and CFYE plans to directly assess one of the course learning outcomes.

Though first-year student retention and National Survey of Student Engagement data were not available for publication, they will be collected and WES students' results compared with students not enrolled in the course. With the new course learning outcomes, data-informed syllabus, and a robust faculty and Fellow development plan, CFYE can now make informed improvements to the seminar and ensure its ongoing responsiveness to new students' needs.

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Fostering a Transfer Student-Receptive Ecosystem at the University of Cincinnati

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For years, transfer, transition, and non-matriculated students at the University of Cincinnati (UC) faced a clear service gap. Historically, the admissions office at the large urban public institution (45,000 students) had primary responsibility for serving these populations, focusing largely on recruitment and centralized credit evaluation. But shuffling students between recruitment, orientation, and the college's 12 decentralized advising offices often left them confused and generally feeling disconnected from campus.

In 2016, the university reported that nearly 40% of that year's graduates did not begin their academic career at UC's flagship campus; also, of all the students transferring to UC each semester, only 42% were graduating within six years. Following recommendations outlined in the 2014 Complete College Ohio plan and the 2015 UC Advising Strategic Plan, the university committed to a major investment in transfer-student advisement by creating the Center for Pathways Advising and Student Success (CPASS) to understand and address this growing, underserved population. As part of UC's strategic restructuring and the Advising Strategic Plan, we secured funding for four advising positions and created leadership roles in advisor training and professional development. Funding also went to online technologies, including early-alert software.

CPASS's Aim: Uncommon Collaboration

Housed within enrollment management, CPASS is one of only a handful of advising offices to live outside of an academic college, and the only one on campus open for walk-in advising throughout the academic year. Its location, two floors below admissions and one floor below the One Stop Student Service Center, allows for referral, partnership, and collaboration between offices that traditionally do not work closely together.

Transfer Ambassadors at the University of Cincinnati give new transfers a tour of campus, showing them where to get student IDs and parking passes and how to find resources such as libraries and recreation centers. Photo credit: Brittany Bibb/ University of Cincinnati

At the center of the Advising Strategic Plan are Pathways advisors, who support new and prospective transfer students by answering questions on topics such as credit evaluation, applicability to major, and orientation. While broadly resourced to support student success, the Pathways advisors (along with transition advisors at each of two regional campuses) primarily focus on students in transition, a group that includes transfer, regional campus transition, on-campus major-changers, and non-matriculated students. Pathways advisors are trained in areas such as curriculum, admissions requirements to competitive programs, and credit applicability.

Each advisor also is responsible for building and sustaining a sense of welcome and belonging for students in transition. Three assistant directors help oversee Pathways advising, advisor training and professional development, and Starfish, UC's early-alert and online appointment-scheduling software. A director and program coordinator help to build synergy (and capitalize resources) between these three distinct areas.

To provide further support, the university hosts Transfer Welcome Days, full-day events designed to connect students with on-campus resources, including public safety, academic support services, leadership opportunities, identity groups, and more. The school's Online Transfer Welcome Guide, housed in Blackboard, the virtual-learning environment and course management system, is a web-based orientation solution designed to supplement in-person programming.

Since opening in September 2016, CPASS has overhauled UC's transfer website resources and collaborated with the university orientation office to create programming geared toward transfer students. CPASS also recently launched a free mobile app that connects incoming transfers to university resources and includes links to assessment information to help advisors understand transfers' unique needs. Any prospective or currently enrolled student can access the app.

CPASS programming also aims to help currently enrolled transfer students sustain a sense of belonging on campus. The institution offers weekly transfer workshops on topics ranging from UC culture to résumé writing and financial literacy. Advisors are also partnering with two student organizations (Tau Sigma and Transfer Ambassadors) to help plan and implement CPASS programming.

Partnership Opportunities

Gaining buy-in and establishing clear responsibility lines are key to earning trust among internal and external partnerships. For CPASS, one obvious connection was working with advisors in the Center for Exploratory Studies, who also serve students university-wide at various stages in the major-selection process. Advisors from CPASS and Exploratory Studies share information about admission requirements and the first-year curriculum, making personalized referrals as appropriate. CPASS also offers major-changing workshops each semester to connect students with their new area of study, or refer to Exploratory Studies those who need help deciding on a major or gaining admission to selective programs.

Another partnership opportunity came with neighboring Cincinnati State Technical and Community College. CPASS capitalized on a renewed articulation agreement to re-establish and strengthen ties between the two schools; the institutions plan to meet regularly and target prospective transfers to UC with outreach programming. New programmatic articulation agreements and clear 2+2 major maps are in the works to make the path clearer for students at the two-year campus.

The Pathways advisors also assist with a variety of priority initiatives at CPASS. One advisor helps research content for new online advisor training available through Blackboard, while another serves as a Starfish subject matter expert, for example. Advisors can access

> "Since opening, CPASS has overhauled UC's transfer website resources and collaborated with the university orientation office to create programming geared toward transfer students."

early-alert notifications and regularly monitor student progress to ensure appropriate follow-up.

CPASS's positioning in enrollment management provides a unique lens to how the university serves its transfer population. In fall 2016, the provost's office convened a transfer/transition task force to make recommendations regarding the most critical needs of transfer students at UC. Using the Aspen Institute's Transfer Playbook (Wyner, Deane, Jenkins, & Fink, 2016) as a discussion guide, the task force aims to ensure the university culture change for transfers is "systematic, holistic, integrated, comprehensive and assessed to measure success" (Strempel, 2013, p. 12).

While many recommendations by the task force have already been realized (e.g., welcome programming, advising resources), opportunities for improvement abound. Areas such as financial aid, transfer major maps, and continued partnerships with area community colleges and regional campuses will be priorities for the CPASS team in the coming months. Also, UC plans to assess the effectiveness of CPASS programming through partnerships with the Office of Institutional Research and strategies learned through the NACADA Advising Assessment Institute. We will seek comparative data in fall 2017, but in the meantime there are signs these initiatives are working. In the first year the university offered professional academic advising for prospective transfers through Pathways, UC's confirmations were up 15% over the same period a year before. Anecdotally, 90% of all students who attended our first 2016 fall and spring Transfer Welcome Days (114 attendees in all) were registered for summer or fall 2017 classes at publication time.

While CPASS strives to address many of the needs identified by the task force, the center clearly cannot tackle the school's transfer issues alone. Sustained key partnerships with campus transfer champions, along with assessment data from new initiatives, will be critical to ensure the university continues to recognize the importance of a healthy transfer-receptive ecosystem in helping this underserved population thrive. e

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Developing a Post-First-Year Seminar Series for Students on Probationary Status

The years between 2002 and 2012 saw significant enrollment increases for three disadvantaged student groups at Australian universities: low socioeconomic status (SES; 41%), non-English-speaking background (62%), and students with disabilities (Learning and Teaching Quality Committee, 2015). In 2015, the federal government increased Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funding via the *Higher Education Support Act* to support retention and completion rates for these students (Learning and Teaching Quality Committee, 2015). At Victoria University in Melbourne, Academic Support and Development (ASD) initiated a one-year pilot program that used part of this funding to explore strategies for second-year students returning under probationary status.

For the most part, probation policies in Australia are non-intrusive: Students receive a letter with a list of student services, including ASD, available to them. Most students who receive these letters see the services as optional, and only a few students actually contact student services.

The focus of our pilot study was on preparing and delivering targeted academic support workshops to sophomores who have made unsatisfactory progress in the prior year. Such an initiative is unique — an effort to promote an intrusive model of academic support within a university environment that promotes a non-intrusive response.

Post-First-Year Seminar/Workshop Series

For our study, student services invited students placed on academic probation their first year ($n = 420$) via e-mail and text to take part in optional ASD Post-First-Year (PFY) seminars/workshops or other services. After the initial invite, students were reminded about the seminars/workshops closer to the event date via the university Facebook page. PFY student mentors contacted another 20 students via phone and another 10 through student services interviews. Notably, the seminars/workshops were not specifically identified as *probation* workshops, so as not to potentially embarrass students.

ASD lecturers, Students Supporting Student Learning lecturers, and career advisors and counselors at Victoria facilitated the PFY seminars/workshops, which were scheduled a week before the semester to maximize opportunity for attendance. However, only about 8% of the students invited as part of the study participated.

The paradigm underlying PFY planning is backed by scholarship that highlights a proactive approach to student support. The central goal is to convey in a non-judgmental way that the school and student can deal with the unpleasant situation (poor academic performance) positively while instilling hope for the student (Cruise, 2002). Also, ASD lecturers are asked to normalize failure by putting the lack of success in context so students realize they are not alone (Cruise, 2002).

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Seminars/Workshops

The seminars/workshops included the following sessions:

1. **The ASD Introductory Session** featured a student pyramid discussion focused on predictors of success as identified by Wilson (2009): (a) investing time on task, (b) attending class regularly, (c) balancing commitments, (d) developing a social network, (e) having a clear goal for attending the university, (f) engaging with the online environment, and (g) having academic self-confidence. A pyramid discussion is a speaking activity during which learners form progressively larger groups as they carry out a speaking task, which normally requires each group of students to agree on a particular topic before joining another group. Students ultimately join up with another group and have to agree again, and so on, until the whole class is involved in one discussion. Pyramid discussions are useful for practicing a range of functions including agreeing and disagreeing, negotiating, summarizing, and putting forward an argument.

2. **Career Planning for Success.** The aim of this $1^{1/2}$-hour workshop was to ensure students understood the objectives of their degree, its career outcomes, the industries that might eventually employ them, and particularly, the graduate's place within the job market. It reinforced the idea that students do have control over their career direction and future success as professionals within their field. The workshop began by giving students insight into career decision making, referencing the DOTS model of career development (Decision learning, Opportunity awareness, Transition learning, Self-awareness). Students also answered three key questions:

   1. What do I hope to achieve?

   2. Where can my course take me?

   3. Is my course right for me?

   The second question, in particular, focused on understanding the industry and requirements of the job market. The workshop incorporated a strong practical element of introducing students to resources to further their career research.

3. **Planning for Success: Self-Management Skills Development Workshop**. This one-hour session helped students organize their semester schedules, input electronic/hard copy diary entries for assessments and exams, and learn how to plan their writing and oral assessments six weeks ahead. It also articulated the steps for undertaking assignments. Two students from the first round of workshops volunteered to assist with the second round.

4. **Counseling Workshop.** A university counselor (i.e., a psychologist with specific experience in issues of procrastination and anxiety) led a one-hour group session focusing on procrastination and perfectionism and discussed personal successes and challenges with these tendencies.

> "The central goal is to convey in a non-judgmental way that the school and student can deal with the unpleasant situation (poor academic performance) positively while instilling hope for the student."

What We Learned

While the cohort size of our study was too small to produce statistically significant results, anecdotal findings are encouraging. The seminars/workshops were important, as they introduced students to services they had not previously realized as relevant to their success. Students provided positive feedback, giving the workshops an average score of 4.3/5 for *usefulness*, and 83% said their confidence increased after attending. All but two students have since progressed in their university programs and left probation status.

Optional comments from the student participants were also positive. Students valued the pyramid discussion on predictors of success, suggesting the activity normalized the failure experience and thus reduced the stress associated with it. One student commented, "I realized I wasn't the only one who did not succeed," for example. Students also saw the career-planning workshop as favorable, with one commenting, " … It elaborated my future professional life and where my courses will take me. The [career] websites given would be helpful for every student in the university."

Students also reported that the time-management sessions were motivational. One student said two weeks later that "Because I was organized, when something did go wrong, I was still able to keep going with my other tasks. I didn't fall in a heap." Another student said he enjoyed doing "individual time tables and *polishing* them" [authors' italics], adding, "Organizing is a priority now." Notably, one student achieved distinction grades in the subsequent semester and went on to become a writing mentor.

Next Steps

The major challenge of engaging the large number of probation students (about a third of all students enrolled) was not within the parameters of the pilot. On a positive note, students on probation tell us that advice from a real person is more effective than online communication. Importantly, two ex-probation students emphasized that they would not have sought help if not for their lecturers' intrusive approach. We will repeat the workshop series in the future, as we see it as motivating and successful.

Such initiatives may be useful for universities with more rigorous probation processes. In another initiative stemming from the context of the study, an ASD lecturer was embedded into a second-year unit with high levels of disadvantaged students to help reduce second-year failures. This model resulted in a 100% pass rate (excluding the results of students receiving special consideration and not officially withdrawing before the due date). Drawing from the Australian context of universities in low-SES areas that do not promote proactive advising, perhaps such embedded support is the most practical way to address probation.

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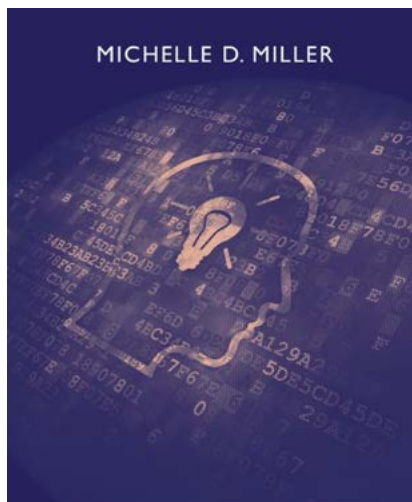
Resource Spotlight: Boosting First-Year Courses and Programs With Technology

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Student affairs professionals and first-year faculty, who traditionally have shied away from online courses and the use of technology, may not see the immediate need for a book on online teaching. However, *Minds Online: Teaching Effectively With Technology* (Miller, 2016) offers easily applied strategies for effective delivery of learning, student support resources, and peer training. For first-year students to thrive, they must succeed in online and technological environments, and *Minds Online* connects principles of learning and cognition to show how technology can be used to optimize outcomes for any course or program.

The first-year community has much to gain from *Minds Online*, as the book

- gives a succinct review of the pros and cons of online learning and how it can and should include the types of critical thinking that higher education seeks to foster. Miller offers strategies for facilitating critical thinking through opportunities to problem solve, transfer knowledge, create analogies, and think metacognitively.

- emphasizes an increased need to make course structure and participation more transparent. Participants in both first-year faculty and academic support programs (e.g., tutoring, Supplemental Instruction) will find ideas to help students navigate courses that incorporate online learning.

- provides a grounding in memory theory, which helps both student affairs professionals and faculty avoid overloading students' attentional and cognitive capacities and also showcases how to effectively incorporate prior knowledge, interleaving, desirable difficulty, and multimedia;

- delves into how attention works, why it matters, and how to get students' attention by using technology effectively;

- showcases competence, relatedness, and autonomy as the core components of student motivation based on self-determination theory. These concepts should be familiar to the first-year community, in which competency is part of the discussion on readiness, underpreparedness, at-risk students, rigor, and student achievement. Relatedness is consistent with programs that focus on community, service-learning, learning communities, and social integration. Finally, autonomy is relevant to courses and programs that have identified independence, self-regulated learning, self-advocacy, and help-seeking behavior as programmatic goals.

Minds Online: Teaching Effectively With Technology by Michelle D. Miller, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Copyright © 2014 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College

- includes effective practices and highlights what to exclude. Miller reviews two hotly contested concepts—digital nativism and learning styles—with a research-based discussion of why both are, in fact, myths and why using them is counterproductive for student success;

- provides a working example, Miller's Psychology 101 Syllabus, made richer with contextualized descriptions of learning activities. Notably, the author offers students a time-management model for completing the weekly assignments and focuses on how the interplay of reading, content, and assignments combine for a meaningful learning experience. Even for non-faculty, the sample syllabus exemplifies the creation of innovative, effective programs by applying cognitive science and technology.

Practical Application

Rebecca Campbell read *Minds Online* while teaching a 15-week master's-level course on learning. The course was set up traditionally, with students able to "grab and go" a week's worth of content on Sunday and not check back in until Saturday, save for a few opinion-based discussion posts on the reading. By the end of the term, Campbell was uninspired by the stereo silence of the group's interactions and daunted by the prospect of redesigning the course for a four-week summer session.

After reading Miller's book (2016), she sought to change the nature of the student interaction and level of critical thinking in the course. A review of the course's learning outcomes suggested graduate-level writing was not a required focus, so she shifted to concentrate on reading strategies. Given the dramatic brevity of the course, a project that applied course concepts while enabling students to learn additional course concepts seemed efficient. With this in mind, Campbell designed a project that required students to test-drive various reading strategies on the assigned reading itself.

Following Miller's book, the project was divided into smaller increments requiring individual portions as well as group analysis. After the first reading strategy, for example, students compared one another's work for evidence of metacognition and self-regulated learning and analyzed the reading strategies for their effectiveness in helping connect, summarize, clarify, and make complex the assigned text. Such analysis encouraged students to practice critical thinking skills, reflected in a shift to more analytical (rather than congratulatory) reflections on their classmates' comments.

The other change Campbell made was to be more transparent, noting in every way possible (i.e., pre-course e-mails, the syllabus, and a welcome message) that deadlines could not be missed and that this was not a summer correspondence course. She coupled the more emphatic messages about timelines with graphics breaking the projects down into steps to reinforce the deadlines visually. For example, Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the Reading Strategies Project.

Finally, Campbell tried to increase transparency by addressing her tone. Without Miller's discussion of emoticons, she would have stayed the course of the stodgy professor, criticizing students for textspeak and rejecting emoticons altogether. She has since added a more informal section on the course's "Start Here" page and continued to use

> "*Miller reviews two hotly contested concepts—digital nativism and learning styles—with a research-based discussion of why both are, in fact, myths and why using them is counter-productive.*"
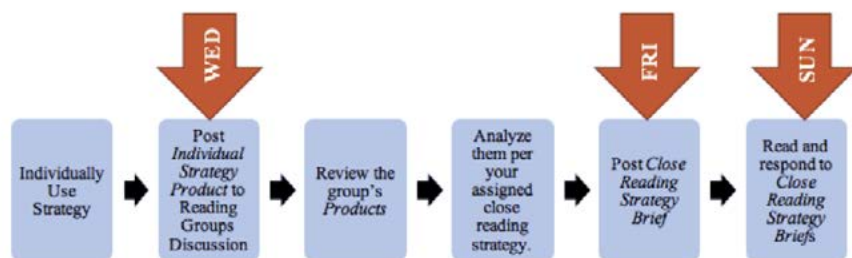
Figure 1. Graphic organizer for reading strategies project.

emoticons throughout e-mails and responses in the course Q&A. The following message is one example:

> The class is on the web but at times you may be better off just picking up the phone and texting or calling me (555-1212) or a classmate. 📱

This led to more than 30% of the students texting Campbell during the first few days of the course. Anecdotally, this felt like more students reached out during the first week than typically would in a full term. Some asked questions they were too shy to post in the Q&A, and some just wanted to say hello. These interactions also felt more personal, and she infused her reply texts to students with more emoticons to encourage them to continue to reach out, as she reassured them they were on track to complete the course.

Minds Online similarly inspired changes to a very different course. In teaching an in-person first-year seminar for international students, Betsy Buford noted a critical opportunity for students to automate problem-solving strategies for accessing new vocabulary, particularly phrases with cultural references. Miller (2016) emphasized that mastery of course content and subsequent critical thinking requires automaticity of skills or information recall. For example, a student cannot progress in math until basic arithmetic operations are automatic. To that end, and to facilitate student practice that would lead to automaticity in strategy implementation, Buford assigned homework that required students to take notes while watching YouTube videos on college success topics such as mindset, time management, and emotional intelligence. These topics are full of context-specific vocabulary that many overlook as culturally derived. During each note-taking and viewing session, students practiced the specific problem-solving skills for listening comprehension that had been presented in class. Students discussed the homework in class, reflecting on comprehension gaps and strategy efficacy. To facilitate transfer and use of higher-order thinking skills (another concept Miller emphasizes), students used the problem-solving skills in another course as a follow-up assignment.

In summary, *Minds Online* challenges us to focus on core learning outcomes and then use the best available technology to meet those outcomes. This allows for streamlined training experiences and increases the potential for flipping content delivery to focus in-person time on critical-thinking and problem-solving activities. Practical and research-based strategies provide a strong grounding of what to do and why to do it when teaching with technology. Further, they have the potential to energize those teaching first-year students by offering a plethora of highly implementable strategies. e

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