

Academic Matters

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FROM THE VICE CHANCELLOR:

ESFY EDITION

Since we all have had a busy year working on the Engaging Students in the First Year Initiative, the members of the Office of Academic Affairs thought that we would devote this last edition of *Academic Matters* for the 2002-2003 academic year to ESFY.

The ESFY initiative began in 1999 with our desire to increase student retention in the UW Colleges. As we all thought about how to accomplish this, however, the focus quickly became student success rather than student retention. This was not surprising given our long institutional history of very real concern for students and their futures. During our search for strategies that had been shown in the literature to increase student success, we first invited Dr. James Anderson, University of North Carolina, to our 2000 Fall Convocation and to June 2001 follow-up workshops to talk about his work in building communities for diverse learners.

The ideas of community building and getting and keeping students involved in their educational pursuits led us to talk about student engagement, especially in the first year of college. The logic was that if we could engage students in the UW Colleges and in their educations in their first year, they would be more likely to stay with us to a second year, or at least stay in higher education. This led to an invitation to John N. Gardner, Executive Director, Policy Center on the First Year of College, to give a presentation at our 2001 Fall Convocation, and to work with various constituent groups throughout the day.

As this initiative took shape, the Office of Academic Affairs developed an internal grants program, Grants to Increase Student Engagement (GISE) in fall 2001, to provide the support needed to move beyond discussions and proceed to actual implementation of new or enhanced first year college experience programs, learning communities, and/or programming for diverse student populations on the campuses. During the 2001-2002

academic year, two Colleges-wide compressed video Town Meetings featured five of the campuses and their best practices for engaging students.

As a conclusion to our discussions in 2001-2002 across campuses, over 100 participants gathered at the Fox Valley campus in June, 2002 for a spring conference: Initiating a First Year College Experience at the UW Colleges. The conference focused on the planning and implementation of a comprehensive, intentional Colleges-wide first year program. One of the outcomes of the conference was a document that identified the mission, goals, and key strategies for implementing a first-year experience at the UW Colleges.

As a kick-off to the 2002-2003 academic year, the Office of Academic Affairs led an institution-wide discussion of the Engaging Students in the First-Year document (ESFY) at the 2002 Fall Convocation and then requested campus collegia to provide feedback on the ESFY initiative document. In addition, Academic Affairs requested campus collegia to provide 2-3 key ESFY strategies their campus might wish to implement/continue in fall 2003 and to link those strategies to ESFY goals. All 13 campuses responded to both requests.

In October 2002, implementing a first year experience initiative was declared an institutional priority for 2003-2004. Based on the presentations, conference discussions and campus input, an ESFY implementation plan was developed and presented to the institution by Greg Lampe and me at a February 2003 compressed video Town Meeting.

Through all this, campus colleagues were hard at work discussing and planning campus ESFY initiatives. On March 29, 2003 over a 120 individuals from the UW Colleges attended an institutional ESFY conference at which there were a number of excellent presentations on first year seminars, advising/orientation and other student support activities, and learning communities. The conference enabled campus colleagues to share their considerable expertise, already developed programs, future plans and concerns regarding student engagement.

While I don't want to leave this look back on ESFY on a sour note, the one negative aspect for the year has been that of the State budget deficit and the degree of its potential impact on the UW Colleges and on our ESFY initiative. We, in Academic Affairs, truly appreciate your willingness to forge on with your ESFY efforts through these tough budget times and through our uncertainty about what we are able to fund. I can assure you, that we are very aware of all the additional work you have taken on for this initiative. We continue to plan for some internal funding given the budget limitations and to find external funding to support your ESFY activities. Thank you from Academic Affairs and thank you for our students who will benefit greatly from your work!

ESFY Initiative Update

By Greg Lampe

Over the past several months, the Office of Academic Affairs has been exploring a number of new and innovative programs that we believe could enhance and advance the Colleges' Engaging Students in the First-Year initiative. For instance, we are investigating how we might use distance education technologies to deliver the First-Year Seminar. We have been considering developing a hybrid First-Year Seminar where part of the course would be taught face-to-face and part of the course would be taught on-line. We are especially interested in developing this hybrid model for reaching our returning adult first-year students. Additionally, we are planning on utilizing e-mail to deliver "just in time" messages to our first-year students regarding advising, registration, time management, add/drop course procedures, and the like. These e-mail messages would be delivered approximately once a week from September through May to new freshman across the institution.

In late April, a First-Year Seminar Working Group was organized and charged with the responsibility of providing recommendations to the Provost for the following: (1) a core list of objectives for the First-Year Seminar; (2) a description of expectations of students including Colleges-wide proficiencies assigned to the course and a list of possible assignments; (3) a list of topics to be covered over the course of the semester (i.e., a listing of core subject areas to be covered in the course); and (4) a list of possible textbooks. The Working Group is planning on having these recommendations ready before the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year.

In these uncertain budget times, the Office of Academic Affairs is pursuing external funding to support our first-year initiative. Specifically, we are working with the Lumina Foundation for Education and with Senator Herb Kohl's offices in Milwaukee and Washington, D.C., to secure funding for the ESFY initiative. We will keep you informed of our efforts, and we plan to continue to aggressively pursue external funding sources.

Despite the budget uncertainties, we remain excited about the prospect of working closely with you to advance our shared vision for reshaping the college experience to meet the needs of those students who are navigating their way through the first-year of college. We look forward to the good work ahead!

Engaging Students in the First Year: Orientation

By Nora McGuire

"There is considerable evidence that orientation programs help retain students, from summer pre-enrollment programs through programs and services offered on arrival, and throughout the freshmen year," say M. Lee Upcraft and John N. Gardner in their book titled *The Freshman Year Experience*. The last time the University of Wisconsin Colleges conducted a formal review of its orientation practices was in 1991. At that time, a working group appointed by the Provost was asked to identify current orientation practices throughout the UW System,

including the UW Colleges, and to make recommendations for a minimum core of items to be included in any UW Colleges orientation program.

It was appropriate, therefore, with the advent of the “Engaging Students in the First Year” initiative, to begin again to examine orientation programs in the UW Colleges. Upcraft and Gardner state “Participation in orientation activities can result in better academic achievement and higher retention. To achieve these results, institutions must build comprehensive orientation programs that are based on principles of student development, are appropriately timed and sequenced, from the pre-enrollment period, through the entering period, and during the first year, include families of freshmen, allow for maximum involvement of and interaction with faculty, staff and other students, familiarize freshmen with the academic demands of the institution, familiarize freshmen with the campus environment, including facilities, services and programs, are responsive to the needs of all freshmen, not just mainstream students, are coordinated by a central office and are evaluated to determine their impact on freshman success.”

To begin the examination of orientation, the focus of the UW Colleges Spring Student Services Meeting was orientation. Greg Smith, Assistant Dean and Director, First-Year Interest Groups, UW-Madison, gave a presentation concerning characteristics of effective orientation programs. Dr. Smith also discussed the First-Year Interest Group Program at UW-Madison, and shared the efforts underway at that institution for the review and reorganization of the orientation program.

Participants at the meeting were then divided into small groups and were asked to respond to a series of questions pertaining to orientation, including the integration of orientation with the “Engaging Students in the First Year” initiative, and the most effective methods for achieving the goals of the orientation program. Each campus was also asked to bring a description of a best practice in orientation that could be shared with other campuses.

A public folder will be created that will enable student services staff to post ideas and questions concerning orientation as the discussion initiated at the meeting continues to evolve, and orientation programming will continue to be a focus of attention and improvement. The extension of orientation throughout the freshmen year will be examined.

Assessing the ESFY Program
By Gregg Nettesheim

In the first year of ESFY we will assess the impact of our first-year seminars using data collected from either the PRISM student information system, or from surveys or focus groups conducted at participating campuses. In future years we hope that an improved budget outlook will allow us to utilize one of the many survey assessment instruments developed specifically for measuring first year programs.

We will begin with a simple two part analysis, seeking to understand: 1. who is participating in the first-year seminars, and 2. what impact these seminars have on students. In keeping with our mission we will focus on assessing the impact these seminars have on student learning, retention, and transfer.

The chart below shows the kinds of information we will be collecting in order to understand these two aspects of ESFY. Some of these data, for example demographic information, will be collected only once. Other data will need to be collected every term for as long as the student is enrolled. In the case of transfer information, we will collect this for up to 3 years following the last term of attendance at the UW Colleges.

For each student enrolling in a first-year seminar we will collect or measure the following pieces of information:

Participant Profile	Performance
<u>Demographics</u>	<u>Learning</u>
Campus	Term GPA
High school rank	Cumulative GPA
Act scores	Cum. GPA by gen. ed. {AP, HU, NS, SS, etc.}
Age and gender	<u>Retention</u>
1 st generation college student?	Course retention
Pell Grant eligible?	Student retention
<u>Administrative Data</u>	<u>Transfer</u>
Date of admission	Transfer year/term
Date of first-year seminar registration	Transfer school persistence
Guaranteed Transfer participation	Transfer School type {u.w.s., other public u., private college, voc./tech}
<u>Curricular</u>	
Prior summer enrollment	
Fall course load	
Spring course load	
First-year seminar course/section id	

With this information we hope to be able to answer the following questions:

- ∞ What impact does the first-year seminar have:
 - on student achievement (GPA)?
 - on course and student retention?
 - on student engagement on the campus?
 - on transfer decisions?

- ∞ Which students appear to benefit most from the first-year seminar? Are we enrolling a proportional number of these students in the seminars?

- ∞ Does the first-year seminar appear to be more helpful in some general education areas than in others?

Continuing Education Programming Supports ESFY

By Diane Pillard

Beginning this summer, the Office of Continuing Education-Extension will be offering a variety of non-credit, on-line courses in support of the Engaging Students in the Freshman Year (ESFY) initiative.

Because all courses are offered on-line, students can complete coursework when and where they want. These instructor-led online courses will run for six weeks and consist of six or 12 lessons which are supplemented by interactive quizzes, assignments, tutorials, and online discussions. All materials are available over the World Wide Web. To participate, students must have Internet access, an email address, and a web browser. Fees are estimated at \$69-79 for each course.

Courses available this summer include:

- ∞ Keys to Effective Communication
- ∞ Conquer Your Stress
- ∞ Grammar Refresher
- ∞ Merrill Ream Speed Reading
- ∞ Grammar for ESL

Additional courses available this fall include:

- ∞ Constructing Clear Messages
- ∞ Conflict Resolution & Problem Solving
- ∞ Time Management

Anyone interested in developing and teaching “Are You Financially Prepared for College” should contact Diane Pillard at 608-263-5393. Students interested in registering for any of the available courses should contact their campus director of Continuing Education.

ESFY Online

By Barbara Stinson

The Office of Distance Education is excited about the UWC ESFY initiative. We are particularly eager to move forward in our online program initiative utilizing the experience of our Online Academic Advisor, Mikki Jeschke. Mikki completed John Gardner’s Freshman Seminar Instructor Training Workshop in 1996 when she was employed by the UW-Rock County. Since then, she has been teaching versions of the Freshman Year Experience for the past 6 years, both at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis and most recently at Syracuse University. She brings to the table knowledge of FYE principles and issues as well as teaching experience.

The UWC Distance Education staff will be working with online faculty and the Senate Online Program Committee to identify, through online surveys of students and faculty, the varied needs of our first-year online students and to develop strategies for meeting the five ESFY goals online. We have been working closely with Greg Lampe to explore different means of delivery for students online, and have been closely following the directions campuses are taking. We will be exploring what modules can be adapted to the online population, and what new modules need to be developed considering this unique population and the particular skills required of online students. For example, all students will likely benefit from modules teaching time management, note taking, and test taking skills. However, there may be other issues, such as how to actively participate in online discussion boards, how to allocate time on task in online courses, and how to negotiate through the courseware -- all specifically necessary for preparing first-year online student. Our overall vision is to incorporate a more comprehensive and purposeful program for the first-year student online while following the basic principles and goals of ESFY.



Have a Great Summer!!!