

# Student Retention & Success Newsletter

## Early Alert Project

Submitted by Ed Morgan,  
Associate Director, Ballotti  
Learning Center

Over time, as a teacher, you become aware of student behaviors that seem to predict which students will learn the most and earn excellent grades, and which students will struggle, ultimately learn the least, and earn poor grades. For experienced teachers, these behaviors become apparent early in the semester, sometimes within four class meetings.

**Don't miss this workshop — What? Six weeks to identify students who merit an alert?! Thursday, February 7th at 2:30pm**

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## Chalk Talk

Excerpts printed from Chalk Talk with permission of author Donna Qualters, Director of Suffolk University Center for Teaching Excellence

Faculty can become frustrated that students are spending less time on out-of-classroom assignments. There are several issues to be considered. Studies show that final course grades correlate with homework performance during the term. If you do not collect or grade these assignments, there may be a tendency on the part of the student to let it slide. Freshmen often lack motivation and self-discipline.



Here are a few tips that may help increase your students' motivation to complete homework and out of classroom activities:

- Emphasize that homework will help them confirm what they understand, as well as identify what they need to clarify in class, tutoring meetings, or review sessions.
- Students need structure (e.g. deadlines and feedback).
- Make students more accountable for

their work. For example, randomly select one or two questions out of the homework each week to check or grade, and let the class know that you will do this.

- Are your students being productive? Do they know that students who study in groups perform better than those who study alone?
- Coach your class on how to approach the assignment and under what conditions.
- Students should know why they are being given the assignment. Let them know that they will be expected to be familiar with basic information before they can do the next assignment or in-class project.
- Help them see the value of the effort and that it is not just busy work.

**Quick Tip: The next time you assign homework, alert students about which questions are particularly challenging or more complicated than they appear. Your comments will serve as an alert to help students budget their time and energy accordingly.**

## First Year Experience Student Issues

### January and February

#### Possible Issues/Concerns

**Anxiety** about second semester performance if they did not do as well as expected the previous semester. Students have added pressure of doing well to be able to stay in school or to keep grades competitive with their peers.

**Moving** to a new environment causes feelings of intrusion because students move into a unit where most of the friendships have been established, priorities set and expectations understood.

**Post-holiday** depression occurs at the beginning of the term as students are away from the security and positive strokes.

**Some** students experience unwanted weight gains over the break with the holiday foods and home cooking.

**Reincorporating** social and academic life is difficult at first after not having to worry about school for an extended period.

**Hourly** exams and other academic pressures approach.

**Relationship** anxieties increase as other couples begin to strengthen their ties or experience weakening relationships.

**Fall** housing planning begins with trying to tentatively decide about living arrangements.

## Faculty Advisor Role in Student Leadership Succession

Submitted by John Silveria, Assistant Dean of Students

Spring is in the air!! Spring is in the air!! As your senior leadership starts to get spring fever, often thoughts of student organization management and leadership fall by the wayside as thoughts of graduation, the job search, and senior week and the impending thought of leaving Suffolk become a reality. This is where you become critical to the student organization process. Good faculty advisors do two things- they stay ahead of the problems bound to come with this annual tradition, and they accept that they will happen.

Common questions to ask senior student leaders include: Who have you been grooming to take over your role? What does next year's leadership pool look like? What do you want your legacy with this organization to be? Or even - "With you graduating- who is working on elections and next year's budget?" All of these questions can lead to some interesting discovery about how little or how much thought has been given to these topics and more.

Once you move your leadership into that hazy area of accepting their future then the next question becomes even more important. "When do you want to hold the officer transition meeting?" But that discussion is for another month!

## Save A Student Award

*Gina Passmore has been nominated for this month's award by Ann Coyne, Associate Dean of Students.*

Gina Passmore (faculty member in the Physics Department) was concerned about a student whose attendance and affect changed dramatically. She called the Dean of Students

Office and after consulting with the Counseling Center, the decision was made to contact the student's local town (the student is a commuter from the North Shore) to go to his house and make sure he was okay. When the police arrived



at the student's apartment, they found that he was seriously ill. With the student's consent, they transported him to the local hospital where he was treated for almost a week! The student returned to class and was able to make up the missed work. Way to go Gina!

*If you have another story to share about one of our colleagues, please send your nominations for this award to Mary Lally, Assist. Dean, Retention Management/Registrar at [mlally@suffolk.edu](mailto:mlally@suffolk.edu)*

## Are You Concerned About a Student?

The Dean of Students Office is Here to Help. Staff members in the Dean of Students Office are available to consult with faculty members who may be concerned about a student for any reason. Student difficulties may present in a variety of ways while students are on campus including poor class attendance, poor academic performance, disturbing writings in homework assignments, and changes in behavior and personal habits.

An on-line report form has been created to allow the Dean of Students Office to receive and respond to reports more rapidly and ultimately lead to more effective early interventions. Please note: the on-line form is not sent via a "secure line" so if you have special concerns about confidentiality, please call in your concerns to Ann Coyne at (617) 573-8239.

Questions? Please contact: Associate Dean Ann Coyne at [acoyme@suffolk.edu](mailto:acoyme@suffolk.edu) or (617) 573-8239 or visit the Student of Concern web page at <http://www.suffolk.edu/campuslife/22771.html>.

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Submitted by Ed Morgan, Associate Director, Ballotti Learning Center

Yet taking the time and finding the expertise to confront each student, and work toward resolving the behaviors to be more productive, is a problem for busy faculty members, especially in the middle of a semester.

We are starting to think about, talk about, and do research about Early Warning Systems. We want to create a system that is simple, easy to contribute to, and that produces academic excellence. We also want empirical data that illustrates a dramatic increase in academic achievement. For these reasons, I would like to invite you to share your ideas about how to improve the current system.

We are gathering for this workshop: *What? Six weeks to identify students who merit an alert?!* Thursday, February 7th at 2:30pm ~ Center for Teaching Excellence, 73 Tremont Street, 12th Floor

We are also collecting peer-reviewed scholarship of early alerts' potential positive affects on achievement, and will share a few ideas with you. We will discuss what conditions are necessary for an Early Warning System that works in the College of Arts and Sciences and Sawyer Business School.

Hope to see you there!!

## OCHO Connects

Submitted by Susan James Leyva, Director, Off-Campus Housing Office

The Off-Campus Housing Office (OCHO) constantly strives to find ways to get connected to our students and for our students to get connected to us and ultimately Suffolk University. We began a program last semester called the "Get Connected Dinners" which provides an opportunity for commuter students to enjoy a free hot meal

**Get Connected Dinner will be held on Thursday, February 7, from 3-5 pm in Donahue 403**

and at the same time meet some other students who like them – commute. We offer the "Get Connected Dinner" on the first Thursday of each month in Donahue 403 at 3:00 to 5:00. The time seems to work for undergraduates, but also graduate students. In November we served macaroni and cheese,

salad, and for dessert – baked apples. We ordered food for 50 people, and it all went and quickly!

The next "Get Connected Dinner" will be held on Thursday, February 7, from 3:00 to 5:00 in D403. We will stagger the food so that students who attend later will still receive a meal. Please help us to connect our commuters so that they know they are welcome to enjoy a meal and meet fellow students and **faculty**.

Keeping in line with our food theme, our first Cooking 101 program will be held on February 13<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 in the Donahue Café. The program is an interactive class where students learn a life skill (How to Cook) and at the same time enjoy some great food and company! For the February 13<sup>th</sup> program, we will be learning about desserts, and just in time for Valentine's Day! This is a great way to meet some new friends, get re-acquainted with some old friends, and enjoy some great food!

## What if I am Asked?

**Is there a makeup class scheduled for the classes that were cancelled due to the snow storm on January 14?**

**There is no scheduled snow makeup date for DAY undergraduate classes.**

In accordance with the academic calendar, evening undergraduate and graduate courses and Day MBA/MPA classes have a scheduled makeup on Friday, April 18. In the event of another snow storm that results in cancellation of classes, the second snow makeup date is April 25.

# Navigating the Hill

Submitted by Olena Savytska

The second semester of college is, in some ways, more challenging than the first. Stress quickly replaces the leisure of the long winter break as freshmen adjust to new professors and new courses. It seems as if college is starting all over again, only the coursework is slightly more challenging, and the professors are a little less lenient.

Spring semester, however stressful, is a time to build upon the skills and experience freshmen acquire in the fall. Continuation courses in areas such as math and science serve to expand upon material covered in the fall. Many students begin to take major-related courses and thus familiarize themselves with the academic field they plan to explore. Although freshmen may feel overwhelmed at the beginning of the semester, it is important to recall and augment during the spring months the knowledge acquired in the fall.

# Class Attendance and Student Absences

Faculty members establish the requirements for attendance and participation in each of their classes. The Dean of Students Office does not "excuse" student absences, but will inform faculty members when students are out of class for a documented medical or personal emergency for a week or more. Email messages will be sent to faculty members as a courtesy to students. Students, when absent from class, have the responsibility of obtaining knowledge of materials covered in classes missed, including information about announced tests, papers, or other assignments.

# Student Retention and Success Committee Members

- Marguerite Dennis, Vice-President, Enrollment and International Programs
- Walter Caffey, Assist. Vice-President, Enrollment and Retention Mgt
- Sebastian Royo, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Lauri Umansky, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
- Morris McInnes, Associate Dean, Sawyer Business School
- Myra Lerman, Assistant Dean, Sawyer Business School
- Christopher Giordano, Associate Dean of Students
- John Silveria, Assistant Dean of Students
- Michael Dickinson, Director, Ballotti Learning Center
- Michael Duggan, Director of Enrollment Research and Planning
- Mary Lally, Assist Dean Enroll & Retention Management/Registrar
- Christine Perry, Assistant Dean Enrollment/Director of Financial Aid

# Freshmen Survey Results

"How Successful do you feel at..." - Selected Results from 2007 Freshmen Survey

