

Student Retention & Success Newsletter

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CAS Pilots Learning Communities

submitted by Sebastian Royo, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

As you may know last semester the College piloted for the first time the linking of freshman courses. This was part of a wider effort to facilitate the transition to college, and improve the educational experience of our students.



The literature on learning communities and the empirical evidence shows that learning communities are an effective educational practice because they enhance academic performance, promote student engagement and educational activities inside and outside of the classroom by fostering the development of supportive peer groups, help students connect ideas from other disciplines, enhance student involvement and contribute to make students members of a

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community, and facilitate and promote interactions with faculty. It shows that students participating in these initiatives are better prepared to make interdisciplinary connections across courses, interact with their peers, and develop more meaningful relations with their faculty and other members of the community. They contribute to improve academic advising, increase students' satisfaction with universities responsiveness to their academic and social needs, and improve student retention.

Furthermore, students' answers to surveys and focus groups seem to suggest that one of the most important factors in their level of satisfaction is engagement in the community.

Based on this evidence the College decided to pilot 8 linked sections last fall:

- 2 triads: ENG 101-SF 101-SU 101
- 4 SU 101-SF 101
- 2 SU 101-ENG 101

The overall response from faculty teaching and students participating in these linked sections has been overwhelmingly supportive.

As a result, during the Fall 08 term the College has decided to expand the number of linked sections, and to explore the possibility to link courses in other disciplines that students take in their first semester. These linked courses will be voluntary for students and for faculty. The learning outcomes of these links will be assessed every year.

With these learning communities we seek to achieve two main goals:

1. Foster student engagement and involvement.
2. Facilitate the incorporation of students into the Suffolk community.

The overall goal is to enhance the quality of the education for our students and to make their overall experience at Suffolk more satisfactory and academically productive.

First Year Experience Student Issues March Happenings

Possible Issues/Concerns

Increasing thoughts/deliberations about suicide occur from an inability to cope with the pressures of academic and social expectations.

Academic pressures increase with the approach of mid-term exams.

With the pressure of the end of the semester approaching, many students start to increase their use of alcohol and drugs. This can cause them many problems, both biologically and behaviorally.

Living arrangement anxieties occur with the forcing of decisions—Should I move out? Live in the same building? Stay with the same roommate? Will a friend feel left out of the plan?

Summer job hunting will be heavy over spring break. Worry about finding a job or not finding one will cause severe anxiety.

Trying to find money to use for spring break is a problem, especially when your peers are going to a place other than home and you are not able to join them.

Fall and Summer Advising/Registration

submitted by Mary Lally, Registrar

Fall and Summer advising beginning March 10 is just around the corner. For some faculty advisors, this is the only time they have the opportunity for a one-on-one meeting with their advisees during the term. Alexander Astin (1977,1993) determined that the persistence or retention rate of students is greatly affected by the level and quality of their interactions with peers as well as faculty and staff.



Prior to advising, the Registrar's Office will forward you information regarding the academic and enrollment status of your advisees: academic probation, students who received an early alert, study abroad students, and students on a leave of absence. Hopefully the academic status information will provide you the opportunity to check up on their current status and make recommendations where appropriate. Keep in mind that the last day a student can drop a course without a grade of "F" is March 28.

Your advisees who are not on campus (study abroad or leave of absence) will probably be flooding your inbox with questions and lists of courses that need to be approved. Registration for students who are abroad can be challenging, so bear with them!

Your course offering booklet and registration newsletter will be in your office by the end of the week. If there is any additional information you need regarding advising, registration, or your advisees, please contact me at mlally@suffolk.edu.

Fall to Spring Retention Rates

Submitted by Vice-President Marguerite Dennis

The spring retention numbers have been finalized and overall the university's Boston Campus retention rate for undergraduates is 92.3% and for graduate students it is 87.1%. Last year the rates were 92.3% for undergraduates and 85.6% for graduate students.

I would like to encourage all faculty to submit proposals for any activity related to the retention of students to their department chairperson. We especially need outreach activities over the summer months. Requests for funds to support these proposals can be submitted to the Student Retention and Success Committee for review. Please let me know how we can assist with your specific retention requests.

Refer to the back page of this newsletter to see the Fall to Spring retention trends over the last five years.

Chalk Talk

Excerpts printed from [Chalk Talk](#) with permission of author Donna Qualters, Director of Suffolk University Center for Teaching Excellence

"I had to take my roommate to the hospital", "I had to go home for a family emergency", "My disk was damaged, so I could not print out my homework". What is a faculty member to do? Should you let them makeup the work without even attempting to verify that they have told the truth? You are sure that they are all not lying, but also sure that some of the excuses are not true.

This is a common problem that will probably always exist. You need to have a firm policy in place from the start. It is important that your policy on makeup work is clear, putting it on your syllabus is a good idea. A reasonable policy may be that a doctor's note is expected for medical problems, maybe a note or email from an advisor or university administrator is expected for personal issues that may affect class attendance. A firm policy on missed work is beneficial to both faculty and your class.

Quick Tip: While it is essential to have a firm, clear policy on missed work, one should still be willing to allow for the fact that circumstances are truly exceptional. Individual cases sometimes require you to exercise your discretion.

Important Dates

Advising for Fall and Summer begins March 10.

Last day for students to withdraw from a course without a grade of "F" is March 28

Undergraduate registration begins April 1

Spring grades are due May 7

Commencement UG —May 18, GR—May 17

Summer Session On-line Undergraduate Courses

The College of Arts and Sciences is offering several online undergraduate course sections this summer. This is a great opportunity for students to stay connected to the University over the summer while earning credits!

Summer Session I

Eng 102, Freshmen Writing II
Govt 347, Legislative Process
Math 165, Calculus I
Soc 113, Intro to Sociology,
Phys 151, University Physics
Sci 161, Physical Science

Summer Session II

Hst 181, American History
Sci 161, Physical Science



Save a Student Award



Scott Reedy has been nominated for the Save a Student award by Vice-President Marguerite Dennis who writes:

Through his programming activities and

outreach, Scott has significantly contributed to the retention of international students. Last year the number of programs for international students increased from 17 to 22 and attendance increased to 1,600 participants. This represents a 145% increase over the past five years.

Navigating the Hill

submitted by Olena Savvytska

The Spring Semester, it seems, has just started. Yet midterms are already back to haunt students. The past weeks have been difficult – professors’ expectations seem to be much higher than in the fall, and the courses freshmen are taking are more specialized and in-depth.

Spring, however, is a good time for students to look around and begin taking advantage of on-campus events that enrich their classroom experience. Lectures by scholars like Friedrich Firson (on the Comintern) as well as networking events that target specific majors give another dimension to the college experience. The Spring Semester’s fast pace may be a challenge, yet its abundance of extracurricular opportunities is truly rewarding for the curious mind.

Class Attendance and Student Absences

by Ann Coyne, Assoc. Dean of Students

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, Assoc. 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
- Susan James Leyva, Director of Retention Services
- Christine Perry, Assistant Dean Enrollment/Director of Financial Aid

Fall to Spring Retention Trends

submitted by Michael Duggan, Director, ERP

This chart shows trends in fall to spring semester retention for Boston campus undergraduate and graduate students. The retention rate has been relatively stable over the past few years.

Trends in Fall to Spring Retention - Boston Campus - UG & GR

