

**Inside
this issue:**

Navigating the Hill -
A New Student's Perspective 2

Tutors Assist Students 2

FYE Student Issues
November 2

Concerned about a Student? 2

Save a Student 2

Home for the Holidays 3

Faculty Involvement in
Campus Life 3

What if I am asked? 3

Act as a Mentor 4

Freshmen Retention Statistics 4

Supervisors Help Retention 4

Why are First-Year Students Less
Prepared for Life on
Campus/In class 4

Student Retention & Success Newsletter

Entering the Maze, *Part 3*

First-Year Student Transition and Our Collective Role in the Process

Mike Siegel, Director of the Higher Education Program, Suffolk University



We know with certainty that students are more likely to persist and be successful in college if they feel connected to, and affiliated with,

the institution, whether it be cognitively, socially, academically, or behaviorally. They are also more likely to persist if they feel a strong tie to the institutional culture (norms, values, rituals, traditions, and the like) and are engaged in the educational purposeful activities (assuming a leadership role in a club, discussing projects with professors, having discussions with students whose backgrounds are different than theirs, for instance). Whatever the institutional structure or design may be, successful retention efforts on college campuses should

rest, I believe, based upon the following core assumptions:

Retention is best done by triaging problems and prioritizing solutions;

No one thing causes, nor cures, retention problems;

Retention is a process, not a product—it should not be treated as end goal but as a residual benefit of developing and delivery educationally-purposeful experiences;

Understanding why students stay in college might be as important as why students depart;

Retention planning is not a one-time effort, but an ongoing, cyclical process;

The first year of college is the most critical piece of the retention puzzle:

Retention cannot be left to chance – retention efforts must be intentional; and

Retention is everyone's responsibility on campus.

Retention is ultimately about student success. With that in mind, institutions must avoid operating under an "educate the best and shoot the rest" philosophy. That is, institutions must educate the students they have, not the students they wish they had or believe they recruited and enrolled. We all want high-achieving, well-adjusted, deeply committed, and institutionally-loyal students, but we know that not all students come so nicely packaged.

Retention Statistics by Vice-President Marguerite Dennis

In this third edition of the Retention and Student Success newsletter you will be presented with several statistics relating to student attrition and retention. In the upcoming months the Committee will be sharing with you information about the enrolled student who persists. The profile of the persister is as important as the profile of the student who leaves Suffolk.

My sincere appreciation to each of you for all that you do daily for our students

Chalk Talk

Effective Use of Office Hours

When a student comes for extra help during your office hours, you can use the below tactics to evaluate his/her grasp of material:

Demonstrate how to solve the problem and then **follow up** with another problem asking the student to do it independently.

Use the "scaffolding" technique. Be proactive at first, giving hints or asking key questions while making sure the student is actually

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

answering the question. Do this a few times, and then give another problem which the student solves on their own.

Help diagnose the confusion or obstacle.

Provide an outline of steps students can follow in approaching and solving problems.

Make arrangements for follow-up meeting to convey that you care about how they are doing. Studies show that when students perceive that a professor cares about their learning and intellectual development, they are more motivated to work harder and will be more likely to stay in a challenging class.

It is important that you know what to do if you detect that the student's problem may go beyond comprehension of materials. If you feel a student is in distress, staff at the Counseling Center and/or Dean of Students office can help. *Refer to page 2 for information from the Dean of Students Office.*

Quick Tip: If a student is struggling with the material, it may be helpful to guide them how to read and refer to the textbook (including using the table of contents and index to locate information), as well as provide advice on test-taking strategies.

First Year Experience Student Issues

November Happenings

Finals Preparation

Thanksgiving Break

Possible Issues/Concerns

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

Academic pressure begins to mount because of procrastination, difficulty of work assigned and lack of ability.

Pre-finals stress starts to emerge as preparation begins for taking the exams.

Time management conflicts continue.

Social apathy causes frustration because of academic pressures.

Depression and anxiety increase because of feelings that one should have adjusted to the college environment.

Economic anxieties increase because funds from parents and summer earning begin to run out; loans become due.

Problems develop due to increased alcohol consumption because students see this as an easy acceptable way to relieve stress and from not knowing how to handle alcohol responsibility.

Pregnancies start to show.

Roommate problems start to emerge again. This is mostly due to the pressure of school; tempers become shorter and people are less tolerant of others.

Deteriorating health starts to affect performance. Reasons include the changing weather and either lack of food quality or the negative feelings about institutional foods.

Students have given up making attempts to establish new friendships beyond two or three parasitic relationships.

Navigating the Hill submitted by Olena Savvytska

October, along with chilly, foggy days, brings the infamous midterm exams. Certainly, students do receive an advance notice from their teachers – perhaps on the very first day of class – about these assessments, yet midterms seem to take most by surprise. With some of my midterm exams already past and others still to come, I think about how much intellectual ground I have covered in each of my courses. To be sure, I have written down, analyzed, and otherwise processed huge quantities of information, yet I do not feel overwhelmed by all the new knowledge which I have acquired. Thanks to all the discussions, examples, and exercises my

professors have provided, the numerous facts and concepts I was introduced to in the course of the semester fit quite well into my understanding of the world. I feel that I truly *understand* the key concepts introduced in my courses. Yet understanding does not always guarantee the ability to regurgitate information on a test. Unfortunately, many tests require, in addition to comprehension, memorization of multiple facts, as well as the ability to apply abstract concepts to concrete situations. Often, these expectations can be quite a challenge, causing students to fear and dislike tests.

BLC Tutors Assist Students

By Brian Moore, Associate Director

Each academic year, the Ballotti Learning Center hires approximately forty Peer Tutors to work as undergraduate and graduate student mentors, assisting fellow students to develop the necessary study skills and strategies for long-term academic success.

Students requesting tutoring services at the Learning Center must first schedule an appointment with an Educational Consultant who will conduct a learning assessment of their academic skills, motivation, and goals. After meeting with an Educational Consultant, students may schedule a maximum of two tutoring sessions each week. Students have the choice to either create an ongoing

tutoring relationship for the semester or to just meet for a few sessions to clarify difficult material and maintain their strong academic performance.

Tutors help students establish and progress toward realistic goals while developing their time management, note-taking, critical thinking, exam preparation and problem solving skills. When reviewing course content with students, tutors emphasize these learning skills to not only assist the student in improving academic performance, but in also strengthening their self-confidence and independence as a successful adult learners.

Save a Student

Congratulations to **Judy Entin** from Graduate Admissions on her Save a Student Award

Chris Perry writes: At the annual new graduate student reception last month, Judy Entin met 8 new students enrolled in Sawyer graduate programs. All 8 are from China and confided how much they missed "home cooking". Judy invited the entire group to her home for an authentic Chi-

nese home cooked meal last Saturday night. A good time was had by all! I've since learned this is not an unusual event. Judy has a group of new students to her home for dinner at the start of every



Concerned About a Student?

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.

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

semester. She also makes it a practice to entertain student workers and fellows during the holidays. For service above and beyond her job, I'd like to nominate Judy for our "Save a Student" monthly award. She is a wonderful example of an employee who, with small acts of kindness, helps with retention.

If you have another story to tell about one of our colleagues, please send your nominations for this award to Judy Benson, Director of Retention, at jbenson@suffolk.edu.

Home for the Holidays

by Susan James Leyva, Director
Off-Campus Housing Office

It seems like yesterday that we were welcoming our students to campus and getting to know them – and now the holidays are slowly creeping up! Some students will head home for the Thanksgiving break and several offices are offering them care packages for the road. The Off-Campus Housing Office, Office of Retention Services, The Student Activities Office and the Commuter Student Association are working collaboratively to provide some of our commuter students with “Thanksgiving-to-go Boxed Lunches” to take with them as they head home. These boxed lunches will be handed out at the Lobbies of the Sawyer Building, Donahue Building and NESADSU to commuter students on Tuesday, November 20th.

Sodexo Dining Services does a tremendous job of filling these boxed lunches with Turkey, stuffing and cranberry wraps, apple cider, chips, pumpkin bread,

and an apple. And, we like to put in each box a personalized card that talks about the meaning of Thanksgiving and how we thank them for being a part of our community.

This initiative helps some students who are able to go home for the Thanksgiving break, but what happens to the students who remain behind in their apartments with no one to share a wonderful meal with? What will they do? What can we do to build community? Do Faculty members know of students in their respective majors that are not traveling home? Are there adminis-



trators, or faculty members who would be willing to have a student) share a meal with their family members? Would department chairs and their respective faculty members like to host a ‘Thanksgiving meal’ with their majors?

The Off-Campus Housing Office would like to help connect our students, so they do not feel isolated by reaching out to students who do not have a place to go and help them to connect to willing faculty and staff members. If you are willing to share a Thanksgiving meal with students) or you know of students who are not able to travel home for Thanksgiving, please contact the Off-Campus Housing Office at acho@suffolk.edu or call us at 617-573-8647. Let us know how we can help you!

Let us know if you have other ideas to help our students feel a sense of community during the holiday break!

What if I am Asked?

I will not be in class next week because I need to register for the my Spring courses. My assigned registration time is on Friday at 9:15. Is that okay?

Over the last few years, the Registrar’s Office has been phasing in assigned registration slots. Students are randomly assigned to a registration slot that **should not** conflict with their course schedule. If they have been assigned a time that does conflict with a registered course, direct the student to contact the Registrar’s Office, Donahue 315, ext. 8430, immediately for a corrected registration slot. Students should not miss class so they can register for next term!

Is there anyway I can drop this course now? I know the last day to drop a course was Nov. 2, but I am feeling overwhelmed and will never be able to finish this course with a good grade.

First be sure to have a discussion with students about their grades and determine if there are any possibilities to salvage this course.

At the instructor’s discretion, if the student has completed more than 50% of the course work satisfactorily and there is a reasonable expectation that all the course requirements can be completed in one academic year, you may choose to issue the student an Incomplete grade.

The student also has the opportunity from November 5-21, to submit a late course withdrawal form through the Dean of Students Office. If the request is approved, the student will receive a grade of “W.”

Beginning November 26, a student may also request a late withdrawal, but will also need faculty approval. In addition to the late course withdrawal form, the Dean of Students Office will give the student a late course withdrawal petition. The student must bring this petition to the faculty member for his/her approval. Please be sure to check either the “I approve” or “I do not approve” box and sign the form. The faculty member may give the form back to the student who will deliver it to the Dean of Student’s Office.

Please note: There is a space on the late course withdrawal petition for the department chair to sign, but the chair’s signature is not required.

If approved, The Dean of Students Office will forward the late course withdrawal form and petition to the Registrar’s Office and the student will issued a grade of “W.”

No petitions for late course withdrawals can be filed once the student has taken the final exam.

Faculty Involvement in Campus Life

by John Silveria, Assistant Dean of Students

As we enter the midpoint of the semester, often times students start to settle into a routine that is working for them. They know what to expect from their classes, they know what to expect from their commute, and they know what to expect when they get lunch at Café Quattro!

However, now that they are feeling more adjusted, many are looking for things to do, programs to get involved in, and ways to feel more connected to Suffolk University.

One way that students often hear about upcoming programs and events is through classroom announcements. You may find that no one is asking if they can make a class announcement because often times even experienced students either a: don’t think to make one, or b. are afraid you won’t let them.

With a commuter based campus, we often overlook the fact that not all students are checking their email, looking at posters, or even “facebooking” their friends to get a better understanding of what is happening on campus.

Giving that simple invite before class starts while people are getting into their seats “Are there any announcements or events anyone would like to share with the class?” might be a great way to open the door to having students connect outside the classroom, find common interests, or even to try something new.

Majors Fair

Please remind your students

**Major/Minor Expo
Thursday, November 15
Donahue Cafeteria
12-3 pm.**

Why Are First-Year Students Less Prepared for Life on Campus/In Class?

By Ken Garni, Director, Counseling Center

In 1998, Levine and Cureton wrote their seminal book on American college students, *When Hope and Fear Collide*. Their work, based on interviews with 9200 students, 270 Student Affairs Officers, and a variety of focus groups at 28 colleges across the country, is as relevant today as it was when it was written. It goes a long way in explaining why the transition to college for many students has become more complicated and strewn with obstacles than at any previous time.

Their one-to-one contacts with students led them to conclude that:

- Students describe themselves in terms of their differences to other students, rather than in their commonalities.
- There exists a widespread sense of victimization on the part of first-year students.
- Students are more socially isolated, have less time for developing social lives, and are afraid of getting hurt in their relationships.
- Students are more damaged psychologically by the time they get to college than at any other time in history.
- A significant mismatch exists between instructors/professor's teaching styles and students' preferred learning styles. *Faculty prefer* learning that is global, conceptual, abstract and ideas-driven, and feel that students need to be autonomous to learn effectively. *Students prefer* direct and concrete learning formats, moderate-to-high structure, linear approaches, and practical and immediate outcomes.

Student Affairs Officers that were interviewed indicated that a) civility had declined, b) ethnic groups on campus did not associate with those outside their immediate group, c) students were uncomfortable expressing unpopular or controversial opinions (not wanting to talk about gender, race, or issues of ethnicity), and 4) that more trouble occurred between student groups at residential campuses where there is more opportunity for students to interact.

Colleges are no longer the (relatively) safe havens they have been for students as they learn to act and think independently and to begin formulating personal values and goals for their lives. The explosion in curricular and extra-curricular choices/options that have been offered as vehicles for growth and self-exploration have -more recently- tended to overwhelm and to isolate students unaccustomed to making their own choices. *The result?* Faculty and administrators must think about reconstituting their roles and responsibilities as they interact with more and more students who are socially unprepared to make what in the past were more "natural" transitions to life on campus and in the classroom. *(Look for the December issue as Ken will begin to discuss ways faculty and staff can help with transition.)*

Student Retention and Success Committee Members

Marguerite Dennis, Vice-President, Enrollment and International Programs
 Walter Caffey, Dean of Enrollment and Retention Management
 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
 Judy Benson, Director of Retention Services
 Mary Lally, Assistant Dean Enrollment & Retention Management/Registrar
 Christine Perry, Assistant Dean Enrollment/Director of Financial Aid

Act as a Mentor

Our last issue discussed the role supervisors' play in retention. In this and future issues we offer examples of how Suffolk supervisors have helped students stay enrolled.

When a student worker (Anna) told her supervisor (Helen) studying at home was difficult, Helen invited Anna home for dinner. After the meal, she suggested Anna use the den to study. Soon Anna was at Helen's home every night for dinner and studying. Helen's husband (Michael) even got into the act by driving Anna home.

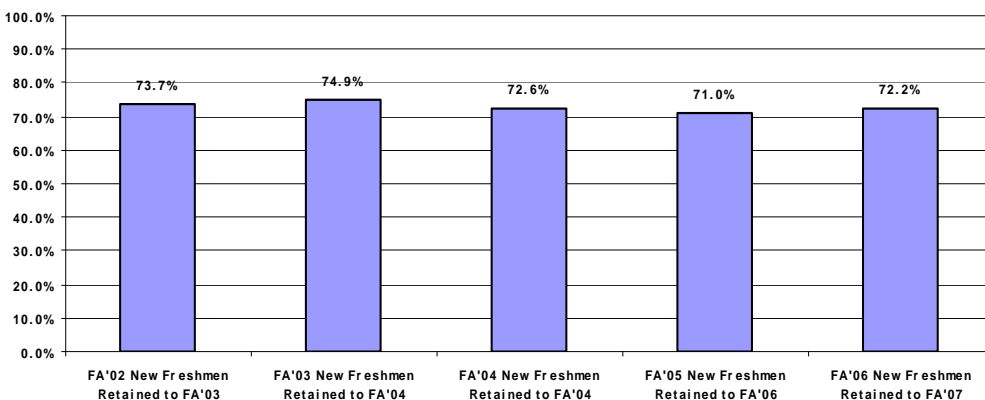
At graduation Anna was quick to mention, "I never would have graduated if it hadn't been for Helen." Not many of us can bring a student home to dinner every night. But if your student worker is having trouble locating a suitable study space, perhaps you could offer a quiet corner of your office/department.

Meanwhile, Anna is working full time but regularly meets Helen for dinner. And Michael drives her home.

ERP

submitted by Michael Duggan, Director of Enrollment Research and Planning

Trends in Full-time New Fall Freshmen Cohort Retention to Sophomore Year



One indicator tracked is the retention rate of the new fall full-time freshmen cohort to their second year. As the table to the left indicates, over the past five years the retention rate for these cohorts has varied from a high of almost 75% to a low of 71%. During this same 5 year period, the number of new full-time freshmen increased from 787 in Fall 2002 to 1287 in Fall 2006.