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Student Retention & Success Newsletter

Are First-Year Students Prepared for Life on Campus?

Ken Garni, Director, University Counseling Center



many of the inherent difficulties that face new students as they transition from dependent and relatively structured family and high school environments to the considerably less structured and more fluid experiences they encounter as college students.

Recent studies by the American College Health Association (ACHA), as well as anecdotal "assessments" by faculty and administrators working with millennial students, indi-

The initial cate that the transition to col-
lege life appears more difficult
and problematic than at any time
in recent memory. The all-too-
frequent references in the media
about troubled students on cam-
pus are a testament to those
difficulties. College campuses

are no longer the safe havens
from the stresses and strains of
"real life," providing four years
of a relatively tranquil transition
into adult responsibilities and
expectations. The "good news" is
that college students are consid-
erably more diverse than ever
before and bring that vibrancy to
our campuses. The "bad news" is
that they also bring a much
more diverse set of developmen-
tal problems to their learning
experiences, forcing colleges to

provide a host of "retention ser-
vices" that have not been offered
in the past, stretching con-
strained resources to the break-
ing point. To deal with greater
numbers of diverse and needy
students, colleges have found
themselves forced to assume *in
loco parentis* responsibilities that
were the norm in the early and
mid '60s.

The widening "disconnect" be-
tween the characteristics of
millennial students, their seem-
ing lack of preparedness to ad-
dress and resolve the develop-
mental tasks common to college
students, and their potential
effect on retention will be ad-
dressed in future issues of this
newsletter.

Chalk Talk

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

Non-Facilitating Faculty Behaviors

Adapted from Sondra Napell's classic 1976 work, below are behaviors that may hinder faculty goals of engaging their first year students.

Insufficient Wait Time. Students need more than a few seconds to mentally process information. After you ask a question, mentally count to 10 before saying anything.

The Rapid Reward. Accepting the first correct answer favors the students who is able to rapidly process information and ends discus-

sion for the more reflective student. Sometimes, just wait again to see who else responds or ask students to comment on the first answer without indicating whether it is correct or not to get them to think more deeply.

The Programmed Answer. If your intention is to create an open exchange of ideas, try asking questions that create divergent not convergent thinking in your class. For example "Tell me what theory you think applies to this situation."

Non-Specific Feedback Questions: The more specific a question, the more likely students

are to admit they're not following you, which facilitates student response to your questions.

Teacher Ego-Stroking and Classroom Climate: Eliminate judgmental phrases in questions. Allow your own hesitancy or uncertainty to display when answering questions. This cultivates a supportive classroom climate.

Fixation at Low-Level of Questioning. Sometimes questions are asked which are really information checks. Asking questions that require students to do complex thinking and

waiting for an answer usually increases the level of class interaction.

Quick Tip: When asking students whether they have questions, change your phrasing from "Are there any questions?" to "What are your questions now?"

Getting students engaged in their own learning and creating critical thinkers is an important classroom goal. By looking at your own teaching a little more critically, you can often modify behaviors that get in your own way.

First Year Experience Student Issues

October Happenings

Midterms

Roommate relationships develop more fully and become stressful

Possible Issues/Concerns

Academic stress from midterms builds with the great demand for studying and preparation.

Midterm workload pressures are followed by feelings of failure and loss of self-esteem.

Roommate problems continue, but they are smaller in scope than previous months.

Values exploration continues, especially in the area of sexuality.

Dating/non-dating/friendship anxieties extremely high. Non-dating students feel a sense of loss of esteem because so much value is placed upon dating.

Students decide to withdraw from school because they either realize that college is not the place for them, they return home for personal reasons, or they transfer to another school.

Grief from not being part of a group develops because of inadequate skills for finding a group, or from not being selected by one.

Financial strain sets in from lack of budgeting experience.

Homecoming blues develop because of no date for social affairs, and/or lack of ability/opportunity to participate in activities.

Time conflicts between academic and social expectation emerges.

Signing up for classes involves starting to think about the following semester.

Adjusting to new study habits includes not just being able to study the way they did in high school. More time and greater workload needs to be incorporated into their schedule for studying.

Navigating the Hill

submitted by Olena Savvitska

The richness of the academic atmosphere at college is overwhelming yet immensely exciting. I feel, at times, as if I am racing to keep up with the topics covered in my classes – reading through piles of papers every night and solving numerous, complex problems. Yet my classes leave me feeling better informed about the world, even more mature, after each hour of lecture.

The immense array of courses available has given me the chance to study subjects that are far

apart, yet interconnected in fascinating ways. Between my Introduction to Law, Spanish Civilization, and Media Literacy classes, I am able to gradually piece together a better understanding of the world around me, starting from politics and social customs and ending in art and architecture. I am impressed by the profound knowledge of my professors and the great enthusiasm with which they share it. My academic journey has been incredibly fulfilling, even in the two short weeks that I have been at Suffolk.

What's an EC?

By Mike Dickinson, Director of the Ballotti Learning Center

The first time a student comes to the BLC, he or she is scheduled to meet with an EC and we inevitably get the question, "What's an EC?"

An EC is an educational consultant, a professional staff member who helps students to clarify their goals, develop a plan for academic success, and connect to the appropriate resources.

ECs are a common component of the many programs offered through the Ballotti Learning Center. It doesn't matter if the student is coming in to request a tutor, is on academic probation, is an honors student, needs help with time management, is a conditionally

admitted transfer student, received an early alert, was referred by a faculty member or came in on their own. In all these cases, a student meets with an EC.

ECs ask a variety of questions to not only address a student's stated purpose for coming to the center but also to assess other factors that might affect a student's success.

For example, while a student may come in with the simple request for a philosophy tutor, we may also learn that he is working 40 hours a week, is having roommate difficulties, is considering transferring, has difficulty talking with his professors, or hasn't explored in-

Excessive Absences

by Vice-President Marguerite Dennis

Welcome to the second issue of the Retention and Student Success newsletter. The Committee will be sending these monthly newsletters in an attempt to keep you informed of the latest statistics and developments regarding student retention.

In addition to the **early alert** program which occurs at the six-week mark in the term, this year we are requesting that within the first three weeks of classes, faculty in Seminar for Freshmen and Mgt 101 course sections report to the appropriate University official, any student who you believe to be in academic difficulty due to excessive absences. There are several staff in the deans' offices that can be of assistance. Of course any member of the Committee will also assist in whatever way possible.

Thank you in advance for helping the University to achieve its retention goals.

ternship opportunities for the summer. While the student will still be able to meet with a BLC tutor within 24 hours of meeting with an EC, a connection with a staff member and a plan for addressing others concerns has been established.

What's an EC? The simple answer is an educational consultant. In our effort to support student success and retention, the answer is anything but simple. ECs can be a valuable resource in making sure that students' greatest needs are addressed and they are connected to the most appropriate campus resources. If you have questions about the ECs or other BLC services, please don't hesitate to contact me, mdickins@suffolk.edu.

Save a Student



Congratulations to the first recipient of the Save a Student Award—**Eric Lee, Assistant to the President.**

Tom Gearty writes: Dr. Eric Lee, in the President's Office, constantly goes above and beyond

to make students--particularly AHANA students--feel welcome and supported at Suffolk. I propose recognizing him not for his help with any single individual, but for the countless times I have seen him walk up to students on the sidewalk or in the hallways, introduce himself, and let them know that they can call on him if they need any assistance. I have often stopped by his office to find him offering one-on-one assistance to a student in a

bind or in need of help navigating the bureaucracy at Suffolk. His dedication to service is unsurpassed.

Dr. Lee will receive a certificate of appreciation and will be honored at a luncheon for all Save a Student award recipients at the end of the academic year.

Please send your nominations for this award to Judy Benson, Director of Retention, at jbenson@suffolk.edu.

Entering the Maze, *Part 2*

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

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

The preponderance of institutional retention efforts are focused on the first college year, not surprising given that most student attrition occurs between the freshman and sophomore years. The first year of college is the foundation upon which the entire college experience is built, and as such it should be elevated to a high priority on campus. For that reason alone, it is critical that institutions channel significant resources – human and otherwise – to curricular and co-curricular structures and academic support services that directly impact first-year students. It is also necessary that institutions collect as much information as possible on entering students' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and values so they can begin to develop a comprehensive picture of the student body and be in a better position to galvanize resources and services more effectively.

A popular belief that has achieved mythic-like status on college campuses is the conviction that the "first six weeks" of the semester is the most critical time period in a student's decision-making process (in terms of whether or not he or she will persist or depart from college altogether), and that an institution's success in retaining students is correlated with how effective its efforts are during that first six weeks. Despite claims to the contrary, there is no verifiable evidence the first six weeks are any more important than the six before or the twenty-four after, but we continue to focus our efforts myopically on this time period rather than distributing them broadly throughout the entire first year. That said, the literature does bare out the notion that the attitudes, perceptions, and habits of behaviors students develop in the first year will likely have an

enormous influence on their entire college experience.

As Schilling and Schilling (1999) found in their study of entering student expectations, "Students appear to determine in their first months on campus how much time they will devote to academic pursuits, and this pattern of time allocation is durable over the rest of their college experience" (p. 8). We as educators have unprecedented opportunity to very early on shape and reinforce an ethic of work in our entering students that reflects our values and beliefs about college engagement, success, and satisfaction.

We as educators have unprecedented opportunity to very early on shape and reinforce an ethic of work in our entering students that reflects our values and beliefs about college engagement, success, and satisfaction.

This early imprinting is critical indeed.

Faculty Involvement in Campus Life *by John*

Silveria, Assistant Dean of Students

Faculty opportunities are abound with the start of the school year. One way to lend some expertise is to lead a small group discussion on a topic centered around leadership. Traditionally we have offered two levels of leadership programs to our students, our Emerging leaders program and our leadership Institute. Our Emerging leaders program is geared toward new students or students who are looking to take on a leadership role within their organization. Typically we are looking for faculty to present once a semester on topics including best leadership practices, motivating others, inter personal communication, group dynamics, and organizational behavior topics.

Additionally- with our Leadership Institute we offer a series of workshops over a one to two day program to student leaders who have been nominated by campus faculty and staff to participate based on their involvement and classroom success.

Faculty who have participated in the past enjoy the small group setting, the interaction with students who they may not have had in class, and the opportunity to utilize some of their background or research expertise in a different setting. We are always looking for presenters, so if this is of interest, please let me know.

I can be reached at 617-573-8320 or via email at jsilveria@suffolk.edu

What if I am Asked?

What grade will I get if I drop this course now? Students may drop courses through October 2. As of October 3 students will receive a grade of W on their transcript. Last day to drop a course without a failing grade is November 2.

I think I should drop this course because I am not doing well, but I am an international student and I need to maintain full-time status. What can I do? Due to cultural differences in university settings, international students may not be aware of the support services that exist for them. Encourage them to take advantage of office hours, study groups and the Ballotti Learning Center. Even when international students are aware of the services, individual cultural norms may lead them to perceive using these services as a sign of weakness or an inappropriate reliance on people who are not in-group members. Faculty and staff can change this perception by pointing out that successful students in the U.S. don't hesitate to use the services they have paid for in their tuition package! A little "When in Boston" speech can go along way in reframing the international student perception of asking for academic assistance.

When a student does need to withdraw from a class, he or she should visit the Office of International Advising (OIA) in the Center for International Education (CIE) on the 6th floor of 73 Tremont to meet with an immigration advisor. This meeting should take place BEFORE any withdrawal paperwork is processed. The immigration advisor will work with the instructor to determine if the withdrawal can qualify for an exemption from the full-time enrollment requirement of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. It is possible for students in their first term of study in the U.S. to withdraw from a course and still maintain valid immigration status. Exceptions can also be made if a student who lacks foundation coursework has been improperly placed in an advanced level course. Medical leave is possible when a doctor or licensed clinical psychologist makes the written recommendation that a student take a reduced course load for medical reasons. In each of these cases, the immigration advisor in the OIA will work with the student to collect the documentation required by the immigration regulations and will register the "reduced course load" in SEVIS, the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. The immigration documentation should be registered in SEVIS before the course withdrawal form is processed.

For assistance with course withdrawals for international students, the OIA can be reached at 573-8154 or uia@suffolk.edu.

Student Retention and Success Initiatives

The following is a list of new University retention initiatives:

[Excessive Absences](#)

[Monthly Student Retention and Success Newsletter](#)

[Save a Student program](#)

Student Transition Support Services

There are many academic support resources available at Suffolk to support students transition to college and their pursuit of excellence. The Ballotti Learning Center, the Math Support Center, Second Language Services, the Writing Center, are all centers dedicated to supporting students' academic transition to college and their pursuit of excellence.

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

Supervisors Help Retention

by Chris Perry, Assistant Dean of Enrollment/Director of Financial Aid

The research continues to indicate students working on campus have higher retention rates than those who do not. One reason for the higher rates is the student worker's supervisor. Good supervisors can play a critical role in a student's development and can:

- provide advice/input on issues facing students
- connect students with services offered by the university
- help students learn to negotiate the university
- serve as mentors and role models
- provide a "sense of community"
- advocate for students
- offer employment experience for resume building and recommendations

Suffolk has been blessed with a great number of kind and caring supervisors. In future issues we will further explore the countless ways supervisors can help student workers, thereby assisting with retention. Meanwhile, if you would like to hire a student to work with you, please e-mail Chuck Felch in the Aid Office (cfelch@suffolk.edu).

Early Alert

Faculty in all undergraduate classes are asked to submit to the Ballotti Learning Center the names of students not completing assignments, in serious difficulty mastering course content, deficiencies with basic communication skills, difficulties with English as a second language, and excessive absences from class. These student names must be submitted by October 12. Check your Suffolk email account this week for specific instructions from the BLC.

Open Majors Fair

Please share the following information with any of your students who are unsure about their major.

Facing a Major Decision? Attend the Annual Majors/Minors Expo, Thursday, November 15, 2007 at the Donahue Cafe from 12-3 pm.

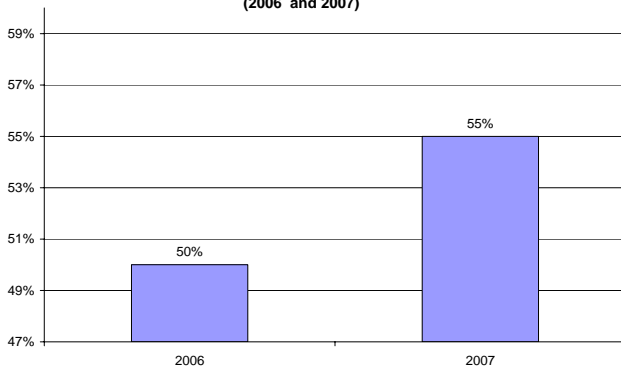
Unsure which academic major's right for you? Thinking about switching majors? Curious about completing a double major or a minor? Looking to register for the right courses in the spring? Wondering what kinds of jobs you can land with your degree? Get the answers you need from faculty members representing all the major departments of CAS & SBS, academic advisors and Career Services staff. Come for their expert tips and stay for refreshments and raffle prizes!!

New Freshmen Survey

submitted by Michael Duggan, Director of Enrollment Research and Planning

These two charts show results from the 2006 and 2007 New Freshmen Survey conducted by the Office of Enrollment Research and Planning. The first chart shows the percentage of new freshmen who reported that Suffolk was their first choice. The second chart shows the percentage of new freshmen who reported that the chances were "very good" that they would be satisfied with Suffolk. The complete results of the survey will be available later this month. If you would like a copy, please email Mike Duggan at mduggan@suffolk.edu

% of New Freshmen Reporting Suffolk as First Choice (2006 and 2007)



Chances are Very Good that Student will be Satisfied with Suffolk University (2006 and 2007 Freshmen)

