Using Assessment to Make Program Changes in FIGs

A Case Study

► **Process Improved:** Providing an integrated cluster of courses for first-year students

► **Unit (s):** First-Year Interest Groups (FIGs)

► **Customers of the Process and Their Needs:**

  - First-Year Students need:
    - Comfortable transition to university life
    - Challenging and engaging course clusters
    - Interdisciplinary teaching approaches
    - Social interaction with peers
    - Study groups to reinforce learning
    - Exposure to diversity issues in a curricular setting

  - Faculty teaching in the FIGs program need:
    - Clear information about program purposes and expectations
    - Simple proposal process
    - Co-curricular support
    - Assistance in establishing collaborative relationships with colleagues
    - Feedback from students
    - Campus resource information

► **Problem/ Opportunity Statement:** The FIGs program is faced with two “problems”:

  - How to expand FIGs opportunities for first-year students
  - How to make teaching a FIG a positive experience for faculty

► **Changes Made:**

  - Re-organized FIGs so that, instead of being restricted to specific residence halls, FIGs are organized by “residential neighborhoods,” including the private halls and “all campus” FIGs
  - Increased the number of FIGs: 4 in Fall 2001, 13 in Fall 2003, 24 in Fall 2003 and Fall 2004
  - Incorporated “Biology Interest Groups” (BIGs) into FIGs program
  - Expand FIGs offerings beyond L&S to include offerings by faculty from the Medical School, the School of Education, the School of Human Ecology, and CALS
  - Developed a fall orientation program for FIGs students
  - Facilitated more opportunities for collaboration between FIGs leaders and instructors of “linking classes”
Facilitated more out-of-classroom activities and events for FIGs students and faculty
Currently developing “post-FIG” options, including co-enrollment in spring courses and study abroad options
Revised FIGs website to be more easily navigated and to include more information
Created a resource handbook for FIGs faculty
Created on-line proposal submission form for faculty interested in teaching FIGs
Expanded program assessment to include other tools such as OLAP Cube data

► Results:
Students continue to be satisfied with their FIGs experience but continue to recommend that even more options be available
Students request spring FIGs opportunities
Faculty appreciate simplified proposal process
Partnerships develop that include faculty and staff from across campus
Faculty enjoy high level of engagement of FIGs students
Many campus constituencies are not aware of the existence of FIGs or of the impact the program has had on students and faculty

► Lessons Learned:
Need for more longitudinal data
Need for comparison of specific achievement data (grades) in specific courses
Need for more campus publicity regarding FIGs student achievement and retention, positive impact on faculty

► Next Steps:
Develop simplified student survey form
Develop “post-FIG” options for students who want to continue their FIG experiences
Find ways to encourage more faculty to consider teaching FIGs
Continue data collection, including surveys, focus groups, and interviews with FIGs students once they are close to graduation

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