Sustaining a Campus-Wide Improvement Initiative: First Year Experience

Showcase “Best Practice”

► **Process Improved:** The office of Orientation and New Student Programs is leading a campus wide initiative to enhance the first year experience for new students. Over the last three years the office has completed an environmental scan, a strategic plan, and developed core goals and outcomes for first year students. This poster will highlight some strategies for beginning and sustaining a campus wide improvement initiative.

► **Unit(s):** Orientation & New Student Programs

► **Customers of the Process and Their Needs:** New freshmen and transfer students, and faculty and staff who teach and learn with them, are our customers. New freshmen and transfers need a more integrated, engaging, first year learning environment, faculty and staff need encouragement and coordination to foster this type of environment.

► **Problem/Opportunity Statement:** Our opportunity is to create a campus learning environment that engages first year students.

► **Changes Made:** We have approached this problem/opportunity from a holistic campus perspective. Rather than creating a new program to “solve” the problem, we are building a network of faculty and staff who work to create an engaging learning environment in the work they do with new students.

► **Results:** Early results indicate an interest and willingness on the part of many faculty and staff to engage in a discussion about first year students and how to improve the learning environment. The first year goals developed by the ONSP advisory board are gaining widespread support.

► **Lessons Learned:** We have learned that the process of creating a better first year experience is a long and slow process of changing the culture of campus. We resisted our instinct to rush to solve the problem by creating a new program, or an add-on, but have approached the problem from its root, and are attempting to change the way first year students experience existing classes and co-curricular activities.
► **Next Steps:** Continue our efforts to encourage faculty and staff to integrate meeting the first year goals into the work they do with first year students. Conduct comprehensive assessment of student learning in the first year.

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