

CTL Bulletin

No. 8 – February 15, 2005

A bi-weekly information sheet by the Center for Teaching and Learning

A New Program for our First-Year Students A Discussion on University Day: March 3, 2005

This year's University Day will provide a first opportunity (see program on reverse side!) for the campus community to discuss the quality of our first-year students' academic and social experiences at NEIU. Why is that important? The first year in college tends to determine students' attitudes toward academia and their behavior patterns for their class work. We lose over 30% of our new students in or right after their first year. Over 40% turn part-time students in year two (compared to 20% in year one), and more than 80% of our incoming freshmen haven't graduated from NEIU six years after their arrival on campus. Clearly, setting the right expectations and providing a supportive environment are crucial for decreasing the losses in college attendance and progress through the program that we are experiencing.

Facing structurally similar problems, many universities across the country have developed first-year programs to increase student success and academic engagement in the transition period during which students have to switch from the high school to the college mode of thinking. In the past, Northeastern has had special seminars for freshmen, but a three-credit hour course in the fall semester is hardly enough to address the many issues students are facing as they become adult learners. Increasingly college campuses are trying more holistic approaches that include challenging academics, social stimulation, and concerted efforts across many offices on campus. Some examples include:

- **Creating campus cultures for first-year student success**
 - Training staff members such as admissions counselors, academic advisors, tutors, health professionals, librarians, security staff, financial aid personnel, and student activities coordinators in how to support first-year students.
 - Involving the chief student affairs officer and the chief academic officer in initiatives that help first-year students integrate their in-class and out-of class learning experiences.
- **Challenging and supporting first-year students in the classroom**
 - Linking First-Year Seminars with courses in the discipline.
 - Connecting courses taken during the first year with a common theme (e.g., "Explore Chicago!")
 - Making the first-year classroom conducive to learning by integrating small-group discussion techniques, writing-to-learn activities, problem-based learning, case-study discussions, etc.
 - Combining service learning activities in the surrounding communities with courses in the first year.
 - Providing Supplemental Instruction (SI) with intro courses that traditionally have had a high failure or drop-out rate.
- **Challenging and supporting first-year students outside the classroom**
 - Designing orientation programs with more faculty involvement, attention to non-traditional students, increased family attendance, and attention to technology applications.
 - Organizing extra-curricular activities that are linked to a common First-Year Theme.
 - Marketing student support services aggressively and directly to first-year students.

continued on next page →

If you are interested in more detail about award-winning First-Year programs or general trends in First-Year programming, please go the University Day Website at www.neiu.edu/~uday/ and click on "Readings." You will find a URL with dozens of two-page summaries of program initiatives organized by university size; you will find information about our own Freshman Seminar and a few select readings that provide an overview of national trends.

The program for this year's University Day offers a wealth of opportunities to hear more about what our campus has been doing in the past and what other campuses in the Chicago-area are currently doing. It also calls on you and your students to present your own ideas and to start a dialogue that will hopefully lead to a proposal for a new first-year program at Northeastern in the near future. Please join us on March 3rd in Alumni Hall!

- 9:00 – 9:20 AM Opening Session: Introduction to the First-Year Experience
Salme H. Steinberg (President)
Lawrence Frank (Provost), Larry Berlin (English Lang. Program), Jeanine Ntahirageza (Linguistics), Daniel Lopez (Acad. Devel. & El Centro)
- 9:25 – 10:40 AM Current First-Year Activities at NEIU
Moderators: Lawrence Berlin (Engl. Lang. Progr.) & Katherine Gleiss Monar (Tutoring Ctr.)
With representatives from NEIU's University Seminar, Project Success, Proyecto P'alante, CASEP, and CCICS
- 10:50 – 12:05 PM A Selection of Creative Chicago-Area First-Year Programs
Moderator: Heather Patay (Chicago Teachers' Center)
- Aurora University
Jodi Koslow Martin (Dean of First-Year Students); and students
A description of Aurora's first-year program is at: www.aurora.edu/firstyear/index.htm
- DePaul University
Midge Wilson (Dir., First-Year Program); Christina Reyna (Psych.); Yesenia Sanchez-Giancola (Acad. Partnerships); and students
A description of DePaul's first-year program is at: <http://condor.depaul.edu/~firstyr/>
- North Park University
Elizabeth Snezek (Acad. Services); David Koeller (History); and students
A description of North Park's first-year program is at: <http://www.northpark.edu/acad/dialogue.cfm>
- 12:15 – 1:30 PM Breakout Sessions: Different Stakeholder Groups Discuss their Ideas for a New First-Year Program
With special sessions for:
- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| Students | - moderated by student tutors |
| Faculty | - moderated by Dr. Jeanine Ntahirageza (Linguistics) |
| Academic Professionals | - moderated by Yvonne Gulli (Academic Advisement) |
| Civil Service | - moderated by Judith Brewer (Teacher Education) |
- Pizza lunch will be provided in group meetings!**
- 1:40 – 2:55 PM Closing Session: What did we learn from today's discussions?
Moderator: Edmund Hansen (Ctr. for Teaching and Learning)

All CTL Bulletins are available on our website at: www.neiu.edu/~ctl/