

STAY@FAU

OFFICE FOR STUDENT RETENTION NEWSLETTER • UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES



Heritage Park Support Center Here for Our Students

The Heritage Park Support Center (HPSC) has grown! Opened in fall 2005 as a supplement to the living-learning community program, the HPSC is located on the first floor of the Heritage Park Towers Residence Hall and is open to all FAU students — residential and commuter.

The following departments are providing services in the HPSC this year:

- Career Development Center — Thursdays from 3-4 p.m.
- Counseling Center — Tuesdays from 2-3 p.m.
- Freshman Academic Advising Services — Thursdays from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

- Engineering Student Services (Free tutoring for engineering students) — Mondays and Wednesdays from 2-5 p.m.
- University Center for Excellence in Writing (UCEW):
Mondays 6 – 9 p.m.
Tuesdays 3 – 6 p.m.
Wednesdays 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

All services are FREE and all departments can accommodate walk-in appointments. If you have any questions regarding our satellite services or for more information, contact Jennifer Bebergal at 561-297-2432 or bebergal@fau.edu or Malikah Pitts at 561-297-2243 or mpitts3@fau.edu.

PEER MENTORS EXTEND A HELPING HAND TO LEARNING COMMUNITIES AS “LC LIAISONS”

This year, the FAU Peer Mentors have extended helping hands to their peers at FAU! In addition to assisting students who wish to perform better in their classes, the FAU Peer Mentors are now serving as Learning Community Liaisons for students in the History, Politics, and Pre-Law, Pre-Med and Psychology Learning Communities.

As LC Liaisons, the mentors meet with the students twice a month to help them develop study groups, maintain balance and reinforce time management, discuss issues they

may be encountering inside and outside the classroom, plan social activities and more. Most importantly, the learning community students have an opportunity to make connections and gain advice from upperclassmen who are in their desired college and major. These students are learning from the best and brightest at FAU on how to be successful and stay@fau!

The Office for Student Retention would like to give a special thank you to the following FAU Peer Mentors for all their hard work and

New Students Receive Their “PASSPORT TO FAU”

The Student Success Committee hosted FAU's first Passport to FAU Conference – A Travel Guide to Academic Success. Representatives from Student Affairs and Academic Affairs collaborated to develop this program to support new first-year and transfer students in their academic journey at FAU. Students learned about the transition into their “new world” at FAU: the new “language” new cultures and norms, and new expectations, as well as tips on how to navigate in their new world.



First-year attendees participated in a variety of workshops based on their personal interests. Topics at the August 11 and 18 workshops included: the transition to FAU

(FAU Teacher of the Year Dr. Robert Watson), setting goals for success (Jill Eckardt and Bill Horstmon), exploring learning and teaching styles (Jennifer Bebergal), time management (Malikah Pitts and the FAU Peer Mentors), stress management (Christine Lynch and Jill Eckardt), money management (BankAtlantic) and test preparation (Kristin Verderamo and Eleni Metropolous).

The Passport to FAU Conference for Transfer Students was held on the Davie campus on Saturday, Sept. 9. Conference topics were similar to the freshman conference, with additional sessions on career pathways (internships and more) and balancing family life with work and academics.

Students were required to register for the conference in advance and pay a conference registration fee. Approximately 77 students attended one of the two first-year student conferences and 12 students attended the transfer conference. We are truly looking forward to hosting the Passport to FAU Conference next year.

For more information about the Passport to FAU conference or to serve as a presenter next year, please contact Jeanne Takeda (transfer student conference) at jtakeda@fau.edu or Jennifer Bebergal (first-year student conference) at bebergal@fau.edu.



Save a Student

The "Save a Student" program was established in January 2003 as a way to recognize faculty and staff who go "above the call of duty" to help retain a student. We all know that retention is a university-wide effort; however, these recipients have taken that to heart and work with our students to ensure their success. Recipients receive a framed certificate and a letter of appreciation. If you know of a faculty or staff member who has helped a particular student in an extraordinary manner, please nominate them for the "Save a Student" award by contacting Jennifer Bebergal at bebergal@fau.edu.

Learning Communities Update

Now in its sixth year, the learning community (LC) program at FAU is continuing to show great success. Visit www.fau.edu/retention for information about our LC programs or contact Jennifer Bebergal at 561-297-2432 or bebergal@fau.edu about opportunities to create new LCs.

Tutoring Clearing House Provides Options for Students to Achieve Academic Excellence

Students often seek opportunities beyond the classroom to help them further grasp complex concepts in a course. The Office for Student Retention maintains a website: www.fau.edu/retention/tutoring to help the students find these resources. The site includes information from the Office for Multicultural Affairs, the Math Department, the University Center for Excellence in Writing, the College of Engineering, and more.

To supplement the various "free" support for students, a list of independent tutors is provided. The student is responsible for contacting the tutor to coordinate times, locations and payment with the independent tutors. For safety purposes, only FAU students, faculty and staff are listed on the site and all tutoring appointments must be held at an FAU campus.

For more information or to be listed on the website, email beatutor@fau.edu.



FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY



Involving Parents in Student Retention

Parents can play an essential role in student retention and success. Research shows that students who have the greatest family support are more likely to persist. Additionally, events in the past decade have created a desire for parents to be more involved with their children's lives — and technology makes it easier for parents and students to stay in constant contact. We see it every day — students get out of class and are immediately on the phone with a parent, describing any problems or concerns they have.

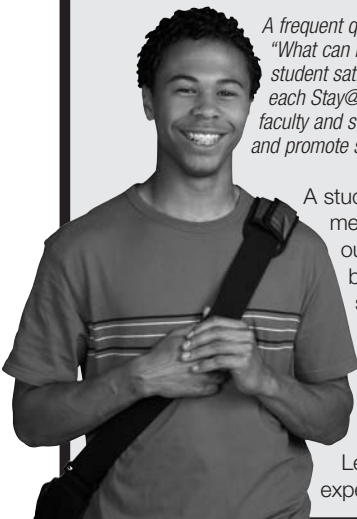
Marjorie Savage, author of *You're on Your Own (but I'm here if you need me)*, (2003) claims that students have a closer relationship with their students now than in the past and they regard their parents as their best advisors.

The Office for Student Retention has been taking advantage of this parent involvement as a way

to reinforce our messages to students. Four years ago we developed the "Parents as Partners" program, which invites parents to join an email list-serve to allow them to be partners in student success. The parent list-serve keeps them up-to-date with what is happening on campus as well as offers practical advice to address the different issues and concerns that students face. We currently offer list-serves for parents of first-, second- and third-year students; each one addresses their specific needs and information that we want to share with those groups.

If you have information to share with parents or that you feel parents can help to share with their students on our behalf, contact Jennifer Bebergal at bebergal@fau.edu.

How can I help?



A frequent question we hear in the Office for Student Retention is: "What can I do as a member of the FAU community to enhance student satisfaction and retention?" To address this question, each *Stay@FAU* newsletter contains "how can I help" tips for faculty and staff - things that you can do to help to retain students and promote student success.

A student often indicates to a faculty or staff member that he or she is thinking of dropping out of school before actually leaving. This may be expressed directly or indirectly. Predicting a student's dropout potential before the student drops out is key to providing the support needed to help him or her stay. If you feel a student is at-risk for attrition, please refer him or her directly to the Office for Student Retention at 561-297-2243. Let's work as a team to enhance the student's experience and help all students *stay@fau!*

How Faculty Can Further Encourage Student Learning and Academic Excellence

The ability to make connections with other students, faculty and administrators is an important predictor of student persistence. Faculty and administrators must work together to create engaging educational settings for all students. As FAU prepares to formalize a Center for Teaching Excellence, the *stay@tau* newsletter will provide tips to enhance teaching excellence. These centers, located at colleges and universities throughout the United States, help advance the cause of college teaching by working with faculty members to cultivate an institutional climate in which teaching is highly valued and one that promotes excellence in student learning..

So, you know your ‘stuff’ – but can you teach it effectively?

(adapted with permission from Benson, S. (2005). Building Better Faculty. Teaching & Learning News (14)4.)

Teaching is an ancient profession. Its roots can be traced back to ancient Egyptian, Indian, Chinese and Western societies, and discussion of the connections between teaching and student learning occurred in ancient Chinese and Western Societies. However, our understanding of how learning occurs and how to best connect teaching with student learning is much newer. Only in the last few decades has a body of scholarship which specifically addresses how students learn begun to emerge (see How People Learn and Mind Brain School for more information). Unfortunately, most university faculty and graduate student teachers are unaware of this growing body of information and knowledge. When faced with their first teaching assignment new instructors often assume that students will learn the same way they did, and so they teach in the ways that they were

taught. However, the students they will teach will for the most part not be like them. Rather, their students will have a hodgepodge of abilities, learning styles, and learning attitudes, and will represent a wide diversity of social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Seasoned faculty are aware of such differences and often believe that all students will get the materials if they teach it well.

The challenge lies in defining “teach it well.” To many teachers this means knowing the material, covering it, being prepared, giving clear and organized lectures, facilitating good discussions, and answering student questions. If these criteria are met, does this mean that materials were well taught? Certainly, if the definition of teaching is to “give systematic information, instruction or training” (American Century Dictionary). However, if the definition of

teaching is “to cause to learn” (ibid.) then the answer depends on whether the students learned the material and the nature of the evidence showing that students learned the material.

By better understanding how students learn, faculty are better equipped to design, adapt, and develop effective teaching methods to enhance student learning. Most university faculty just “go out and do it” without an awareness of what we know about how people learn, with a minimum set of teaching tools (pedagogies), without teacher training or mentoring, and without knowledge of what others in their discipline are doing with respect to teaching and teaching innovations. Would any of our professional disciplines survive and flourish if graduates were sent forth with such meager preparation for the work they are expected to accomplish in their disciplines?

Many graduate students in teaching roles enter the classroom without prior exposure to basic theories on student learning and without any awareness of the multiplicities of available pedagogies. Few are aware of the literature on student learning styles, and for most the way to improve their teaching is to simply work longer and harder at doing the things (lecture, recitation, and discussion) they experienced as students. Many of these talented students will likely be future university faculty. Please encourage your graduate students and fellow faculty to research the literature on student learning and take advantage of the many resources — many right here at FAU — to enhance your teaching and provide the best opportunities for student learning.

Methodology impacts student learning and retention of material:

This is not a new concept. During the 1960s, Edgar Dale theorized that learners retain more information by what they “do” as opposed to what is “heard,” “read” or “observed.” His research led to the development of the Cone of Experience with an emphasis on “learning by doing.”

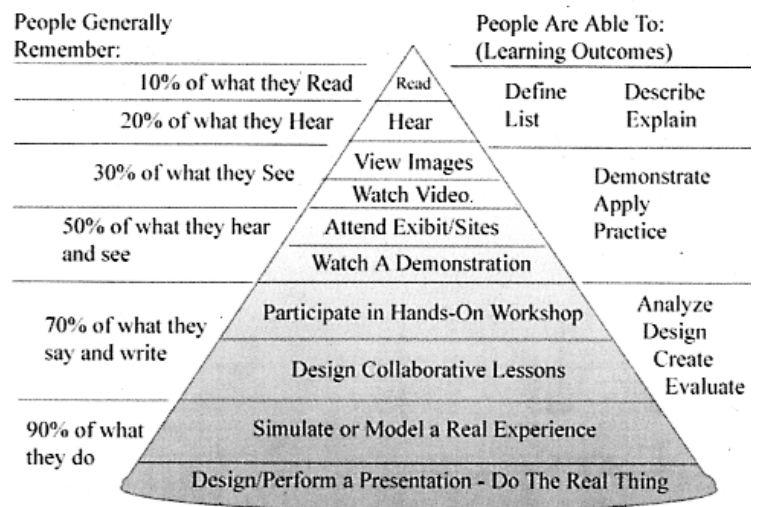
Think about how we teach students — and how we expect them to learn.

How Can Instructors Use the Cone of Experience?

According to Dale's research, the least effective method (at the top) involves learning from information presented through verbal symbols, i.e., listening to lectures. The most effective methods (at the bottom) involve direct, purposeful learning experiences, such as hands-on or field experience. The cone charts the average retention rate for various methods of teaching. The further you progress down the cone, the greater the learning and the more information is likely to be retained. It also suggests that when choosing an instructional method it is important to remember that involving students in the process strengthens knowledge retention.

It reveals that “action-learning” techniques result in up to 90% retention. People learn best when they use sensory-based perceptual learning styles. The more senses used in interacting with a resource, the better chance that many students can learn from it. According to Dale, instructors should design instructional activities that build upon more real-life experiences. The cone is a tool to help instructors make decisions about resources and activities. The instructor can ask the following:

- Where will the student's experience with this instructional resource fit on the cone? How far is it removed from real-life?
- What kind of learning experience do you want to provide in the classroom?
- How does this instructional resource augment the information supplied by the textbook?
- What and how many senses can students use to learn this instructional material?
- Does the instructional material enhance learning?



Dale's Cone of Experience

Teaching Large Lecture Classes

(adapted with permission from Richard M. Felder's paper: *Beating the Numbers Game: Effective teaching in large classes*, presented at the 1997 ASEE Annual Conference, Milwaukee, WI, June 1997. For full text and bibliography, visit <http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Papers/Largeclasses.htm>.)



Many faculty believe that anything that can be done in a large class you can do better in a small one. When we find ourselves teaching a mob, it's easy to throw up our hands, conclude that there's no chance of getting any responsiveness out of 150 or 300 students in an auditorium, and spend 45 hours showing transparencies to the listless 60% who bother to show up from day to day. We can generate some interest by bringing demonstrations to class, but there are only so many hydrogen balloons we can explode and even they lose their impact after a while. Fortunately, there are ways to make large classes almost as effective as their smaller counterparts by getting students actively involved and helping them develop a sense of community.

In-Class Exercises — Lectures as a rule have little educational value. People learn by doing, not by watching and listening (see Cone of Experience article). If you're teaching a small class and you're good, you may be able to prod many of your students into activity

—get them asking and answering questions, discussing issues, challenging conclusions, laughing at your jokes, whatever. No matter how good you are, though, you probably won't be able to persuade most students to open their mouths in front of 120 classmates - it feels too risky for them. If you hope to move away from the wax museum-like aspect of most large lectures, you'll have to try a different approach.

A technique you can count on is the in-class exercise. As you lecture on a body of material or go through a problem solution, instead of just posing questions to the class as a whole and enduring the ensuing time-wasting silences, occasionally assign a task and give the students anywhere from 30 seconds to five minutes to come up with a response. Anything can serve as a basis for these exercises, including the same questions you normally ask in lectures and perhaps some others that might not be part of your current repertoire.

In these exercises you might sometimes ask the students to write responses individually, sometimes to work in pairs or groups of three, and sometimes to work alone and then to form pairs and combine and improve their individual responses ("think-pair-share"). The more you vary your methods, the more interesting the class tends to be.

Whichever approach you use for the exercises (individual, pairs, groups, or think-pair-share), at least some of the time you should call on groups or individuals to present what they came up with, perhaps landing disproportionately on students near the back of the room so they know they can't hide from you there. If you never do this, students will have little incentive to work on the exercises when you assign them and many won't, but if they think they may be called on, they won't want to be embarrassed and so you'll get 90+ percent of them actively involved in what you're teaching. Even if you're an award-winning traditional lecturer, that's probably better than your usual percentage for active student involvement during class.

The principal benefit of these exercises is that they get students acting and reflecting, the only two ways by which human beings learn. The students who succeed in a task will own the knowledge in a way they never could if you simply handed it to them, and those who try and fail will be receptive to discovering what they didn't know. Group exercises have the added benefit of giving students an opportunity to meet and work with one another, a good first step toward building a sense of community. (You can augment this benefit by periodically asking the students to sit in different locations and work with students they haven't been with before.)

You can also use in-class exercises to wrap up a lecture period. Ask

the students to write down and hand in a brief statement of the main point of the lecture, or come up with two good questions or test problems related to what you just presented, or tell you how they think you could improve the class. You can scan their responses and quickly see if they got the main idea you were trying to present, identify their main points of confusion, or discover things you could do that would make the class better for them, such as giving more examples or leaving material on the board longer or speaking more slowly or not cracking your knuckles every five seconds.

You don't have to spend a great deal of time on active learning exercises in class: one or two lasting no more than five minutes in a 50-minute session can provide enough stimulation to keep the class with you for the entire period.

Teaching a large class effectively is hard work, but it's possible to do it even if you're not a big-league entertainer. If you make the necessary logistical arrangements far enough in advance, provide plenty of active learning experiences in the classroom instead of relying on straight lecturing, and take full advantage of the power of teams in both in-class and out-of-class work, large classes can come close to being as educationally rewarding as small classes. The instructor's satisfaction may be even greater in the large classes: after all, many professors can teach 15 students effectively, but when you do it with 100 or more you know you've really accomplished something.

NOTE: Faculty at Florida Atlantic University have also seen success in using "clicker technology" in large classes. For more information about the clickers or other ideas that support effective teaching initiatives, visit <http://lea.fau.edu/assessment/workshops.htm>.

STAY@FAU

the University's Retention newsletter, is published bi-annually. Please watch for future issues that will provide in-depth coverage of some of the key services that enhance student persistence and how you can help increase the retention rates of our students.