

STAY@FAU

OFFICE OF STUDENT RETENTION NEWSLETTER • DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

FLC Update

In fall 2002, 219 incoming freshmen participated in the Freshman Learning Community (FLC) program. These students were paired in a full-time schedule of courses with others in their major. Evaluations of the program showed that students feel they are making easier transitions and connecting better to FAU because of the program. Although overall entering student characteristics (high-school GPAs and test scores) of FLC participants were lower than the overall freshman population, students who participated in the FLC had equivalent first-semester GPAs and higher first-semester retention rates than non-participants.



Here is an excerpt from a letter written by one of the participants about his experience in the FLC:

Being an out-of-state freshman at Florida Atlantic University, the FLC helped to prepare me for college. The FLC had a great impact and fulfilled all the duties outlined to do, like putting students together according to majors for academic support, helping us to schedule our days efficiently and productively, and becoming very familiar with the university and the offices here to help students. However, the program benefits go much further — having a teacher who acts like a brother, parent, mediator, and stress reliever and is always there to help students was the greatest benefit. SLS teachers, like Mr. Adam DeRosa, are key to the success that the program has reached. I can think of several times that the SLS instructor helped us and pointed us in the right direction. Adam provided assistance in all aspects of reaching college success. Whether it is engaging otherwise disengaged students or familiarizing students with college academia, the FLC helps us to get the most out of our college career. I strongly hope that this program will be continued so that some day my child will be able



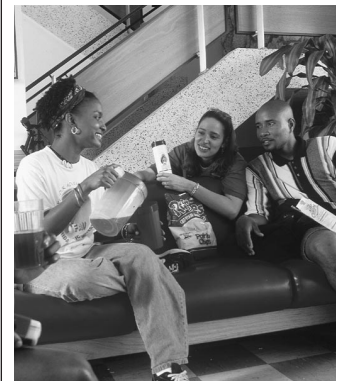
to benefit from such a great program.
—Joseph Cala

And a parent of an FLC student wrote the following:

As a parent of an FAU freshman, I would like to express my thanks for the Freshman Learning Community program, which has been so beneficial to my daughter's introduction to her college education. Through the program, she was assigned classes with other students who are also secondary education majors. This has been a tremendous help in making her feel like she belongs, especially in a school as large as FAU, where it would be very easy to feel quite lost. She has

now made friends with a group of seven to eight students who help each other with their studies, have lunch together, and, most important, serve as a support system. We are only sorry that the program is not available for the second semester, and we would like to strongly recommend that in the future it be extended to include the entire freshman year. Again, thank you for your exceptional program. — Sarah Ringler (proud mother of Elizabeth Ringler)

Plans for the 2003-2004 FLC program are currently underway. For more information about the FLC program or to teach the SLS course, please contact Jennifer Bebergal at stay@fau.edu.



Best Practices in Student Retention

The Division of Colleges and Universities for the State of Florida has coordinated a website that cites the Best Practices in Student Retention at public universities across the state. Six FAU programs are highlighted among the more than 75 best practice entries. A sample of programs highlighted from other institutions include FGCU's Supplemental Instruction program, which focuses on courses with a history of high attrition; USF's CASMAR (College of Arts & Sciences Mentor and Retain Program) mentoring program, which uses trained graduate assistants as counselor/mentors to assist students with their academic needs; FIU's residential learning communities, where halls are clustered by areas of major or interest and academic services are provided that target their specific needs; UNF's Early Warning System, which uses faculty members to refer students in need of academic assistance; and FAMU's Financial Planning Workshop, which provides students with basic strategies for effectively avoiding the credit trap in college.

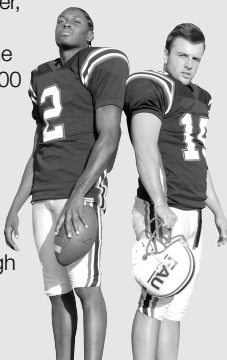


To learn more about programs that are aiding students across the state, please visit <http://www.fldcu.org/retention/default.asp>. If you would like to nominate a program at FAU for the best practice database, or to implement a best practice in your area, please contact Jennifer Bebergal at stay@fau.edu.

FAU Enhances Advising Services for Student Athletes

The Student-Athlete Center for Academic Excellence is the academic support program for FAU's 420 student-athletes. The primary goal of the program is to assist student-athletes in reaching their educational goals while they compete in intercollegiate athletics. As academic affairs officers, counselors function as liaisons between the athletic and academic communities. Counselors work closely with coaches, faculty, and a variety of campus resources in order to help facilitate students' successful transition into college life by instituting academic and social support programs which include, but are not limited to, Counseling, Pre-Advising, Tutorial, Study Hall, and Life Skills Programs.

The Academic Center has recently restructured its services to ensure that student-athletes are properly advised from their first semester at FAU through graduation. Student-athletes work closely with their college advisors to formulate plans of study that coincide with their areas of academic interest. Student-athletes are also assigned to an academic counselor who will educate them regarding NCAA eligibility rules and take steps to keep conflicts with practices and competitions to a minimum. The goal of this dual advising process is to allow students to pursue the degree of their choice, while simultaneously maintaining their athletic eligibility and maximizing their potential in the classroom. Student-athletes are encouraged to visit the Academic Center in the Oxley Center, Room 261 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. (Monday through Thursday), and 8:00 a.m. through 5:00 p.m. (Friday).



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: Student Advising



Advising & Retention: A Marriage Born of Necessity

—Mikki Minney, Assistant Provost,
Academic Advising & Freshman
Academic Advising Services

As the movement to hold institutions of higher education accountable for student success has gained momentum, colleges and universities have had to move beyond academics to find ways to enhance student satisfaction with the college experience, decrease the percentage of students who drop out of college, improve students' academic achievement, and increase the number of students who graduate from their institutions.

It has long been suggested that one strategy for improving student persistence is academic advising. Advising is the linchpin that connects students to the institution. It is often the first vehicle through which meaningful connections are made with students. Advising provides a structured relationship that links students with trained, experienced representatives of the institution. Within the boundaries of that relationship students receive assistance and guidance with a variety of life decisions ranging from selecting and registering for courses, clarifying life and career goals, developing suitable educational plans, and acquiring

information to enhance their problem-solving and decision-making skills in both the academic arena and their personal lives.

Advising has evolved over the last few decades, and it is no longer appropriate to view it as an isolated event in a student's academic experience. Students arrive on our campuses with all sorts of "baggage," which means each of us in the academic community has the responsibility to treat our students as "whole" human beings, not fragmented pieces defined by the services provided by us in our individual capacities. In that vein, every member of the university community wears the "advising" hat. We each have a unique opportunity to help students give voice to their academic and life needs, and to help them address those needs with our combined wisdom and expertise.

A student's perception of institutional commitment is often shaped by his/her advising experience. When the going gets tough, students will most likely predicate their decision to persevere, or "hang in there," based on their belief that "someone" (an advisor, faculty member, or a staff member) cares and can help. If we each take the posture that we have something to offer – a kind word, a sympathetic ear, knowledge of referral resources – we become advising advocates and not "stumbling blocks" for our students.

For more information about advising services at FAU, please contact the Office of Freshman Academic Advising Services at (561) 297-3064. The staff will be happy to talk with students, faculty, or staff, or to refer people to the correct advisors within colleges across each of FAU's campuses.

How Can I Help?

A question that we often hear in the Office of Retention is: "What can I do as a member of the FAU community to enhance student satisfaction and retention?" Thus, each Retention newsletter contains "how can I help" tips for faculty and staff – little things that you can do to help to retain students.

As intuition would confirm, class attendance correlates positively with good grades and retention. The "how can I help" tip for the spring semester is to make sure students are attending all of their classes. Students who skip classes are at risk for failure. Although this sounds like a simple concept, many students will stay after class to speak with a professor in lieu of attending the next class, schedule an appointment with a student support area during class time, or assume that they won't be missed in a large lecture and that they can merely get the notes from a friend.

Before scheduling an appointment, ensure that students do not have a conflict (sometimes they weigh the perceived value of the appointment with the value of a course) and remind students of the value of attending class. As a faculty member, set up the expectation on the first day of class that students be present (physically and mentally) at each class. If you notice that students have missed a class, let them know that they were missed. In large lectures, remind students that studies have shown that semester GPAs can be more than a grade point higher for students who regularly attend classes.



STAY@FAU,

the University's Retention newsletter, is published bi-annually. Please look 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.