

STAY@FAU

OFFICE FOR STUDENT RETENTION NEWSLETTER • UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES



EXPLORE FAU! LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY

We are excited to announce the development of the EXPLORE FAU! Living Learning Community (LLC) for fall 2005. The LLC will help build partnerships among faculty, staff and students while increasing interaction, involvement and learning inside and outside the classroom.

What will the EXPLORE FAU LLC look like?

The LLC will house 64 students on two floors of Heritage Park Towers. These students will have some courses in common. In the fall, all students will take an SLS (Learning Strategies) course

taught in the residence hall and a library - information literacy course. A career development course will be required in the spring. In addition, students will have:

- A "common hour" on Tuesday afternoons (4 p.m.), when students will not take classes or have other commitments so they can attend workshops and discussion groups;
- Prepared study groups for the courses in which they are enrolled;
- Out-of-class discussions, workshops and guest speakers;
- Additional resources within the residence halls including on-site academic advisors, career counselors and writing consultants from the University Center for Excellence in Writing.

Living-learning communities help connect the curricular and co-curricular experiences of students to create a seamless learning experience. We encourage interested faculty and staff to participate! If you are interested in more information or would like to work on creating an LLC for 2006, contact Dr. Jennifer Bebergal at ext. 7-2432 or bebergal@fau.edu.



FAU PEER MENTORING PROGRAM: STRIVING TO HELP STUDENTS STAY@FAU

The FAU Peer Mentoring Program is off to a great start. As a new up-and-coming student organization, the peer mentoring program was developed to utilize students in support of their peers who are academically at-risk. Peers will provide individualized support as well as information about on-campus resources and faculty/staff who are available to assist students in meeting their educational goals.

This spring, the staff of the Office for Student Retention recruited enthusiastic students to apply to become peer mentors. All students selected attended training sessions on March 23-26. This gave the new peer mentors

an opportunity to learn more about the various FAU departments and services and ways to effectively assist their mentees, while promoting team building within the group.

This summer, all first-year students placed on Academic Probation or Freshman Warning will be notified by mail about the program and interested students will be assigned a mentor as the program officially begins serving students this fall.

Peer mentors will receive hours toward their Leadership Certificate and will earn volunteer hours that can be recorded on their FAU transcripts.

FRESHMAN LEARNING COMMUNITY A SUCCESS!

In fall 2004, the FAU Freshman Learning Community (FLC) included 17 FLCs and over 400 students - and it is showing the intended effects! Students who participated in the FLC had significantly lower incoming statistics (entering high school GPA and test scores), yet they performed on-par with their non-FLC counterparts in terms of first-semester GPAs. In addition, students who participated in the fall 2004 FLC were 6% more likely to enroll for the spring 2005 semester than non-FLC students.

We are currently finalizing plans for the 2005-06 FLC program. For more information about the FLC program, to create a new FLC or to teach the SLS course, please contact Dr. Jennifer Bebergal at ext. 7-2432 or bebergal@fau.edu



DR. JOHN GARDNER - TAKES A HARD LOOK AT FAU...

What can we do to better serve our first-year students?

On January 28, FAU welcomed Dr. John N. Gardner to lead us in a day of discussions about how to better serve our lower-division students. As part of a Title III-A planning grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the University is investigating ways to improve undergraduate education, specifically at the lower-division level, and Dr. Gardner's visit helped us to see our strengths and weaknesses and where we can best impact our students.

Dr. Gardner is nationally known for his ground-breaking work with first-year college students and his work has been largely adopted at universities and colleges nationwide. Gardner compared what we are doing at our institution, to what other schools are doing to successfully support their students. His comments from the morning keynote led to a day full of discussion with a variety of groups and these discussions have continued among many in the University community well after Gardner's departure.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM GARDNER'S VISIT

- We need to focus on student success and improvements in undergraduate education – and retention will hopefully follow. Retention cannot be our main purpose. Gardner stated "First-year student success is more likely when institutions hold students to high standards of performance which are communicated through high expectations."
- A holistic, integrated, intentional approach to student success is needed; no longer are single programs enough to help students.
- We need to make the beginning undergraduate experience a priority at FAU – Retention and student success must be an obvious mission priority and an integral part of the strategic plan.
- Support must come from the highest levels (note: Provost Pritchett and several deans, associate deans, department chairs and faculty participated in the Gardner visit and President

Brogan is committed to studying the issues and working with the University community to foster positive changes in the lower-division student experience.)

- "Faculty are an important key to first-year student success," said Gardner. "Those who respond to these problems are often educators who do not hold faculty rank and tenure and whose activities are largely at the margins of academic life – not at the center." We need to focus on student learning inside and outside the classroom as the highest institutional priority.

GARDNER ASKED US THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What does FAU want to do?
- What do we value?
- What would FAU do if it wanted to be a university of excellence?

We will continue these discussions and ask ourselves these questions as we prepare to submit a Title III-A Development Grant application to the US DOE in February 2006.

This grant process provides us an opportunity for collaboration for an intensive self-study of the institution's first-year programs.

The wheels are turning. If you are interested in more information about the Title III-A grant (we are specifically looking for faculty, department chairs, and deans to join our steering committee), contact Dr. Jennifer Bebergal at ext. 7-2432 or bebergal@fau.edu or Dr. Tom Pusateri at pusateri@fau.edu or visit our website at <http://iea.fau.edu/pusateri/assess/TitleIII-AGrant.htm>. You can also view Dr. Gardner's PowerPoint presentation from his keynote address as well as notes from his visit.

"Everyone has a role. It is not someone else's job. Everything that goes on in the first year impacts student success."
(Patrick Terenzini, 2004)

The Office for Student Retention would like to send special congratulations to the new 2005-06 FAU Peer Mentors!

Carletta Lawrence

A junior majoring in education

Lynsey Bruce

A first-year pre-vet major

Stephanie Lang

A junior majoring in social science & sociology

Andrea Alzate

A junior majoring in graphic design

Christopher Evans

A first-year biology major

Diana Dejesus

A junior pre-med major

Gaurav Gandotra

A sophomore majoring in chemistry

Bradley Siegel

A first-year undecided/political science major

James Murphy

A junior majoring in communication & sociology

Olivianne Jean-Baptiste

A first-year pre-med major

Michael Paul

A senior majoring in chemistry



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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.