

Western Connecticut State University
Strategic Plan Implementation Team ---Student Engagement
Summary Report and Update on Two Top Initiatives for 2008-09
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The Implementation Team for Student Engagement met a total of three times this past semester. The meetings included extensive discussions around the two initiatives identified below. As requested the Team identified two initiatives that it would try to focus on during the 2008-09 academic year. The progress Made in working toward these goals are discussed below.

At its October meeting the team invited Provost Rinker to discuss the status of the FYE program, both its conceptual base, current progress and plans for assessment. Edmund Breitling, graduate student and President of the Student Government Association (SGA) came to speak with the group in November. The discussion focused on how to create programs that foster pride and bring together students, faculty and staff in joint programs and projects.

Attached with this report is a cumulative summary of the work being done on these two initiatives as well as others that were begun last year.

Initiative #1: Enhancing the First Year Experience (FYE) program with emphasis on the student success factors.

Last spring (2008) the Team invited Professor Patti O'Neill (Coordinator of FYE) along with several professors who at the time were teaching FYE courses. Recognizing that the FYE program had only been started during the Fall 2007 semester, this was designed as a general discussion to learn more about the program's goals and objectives. During the meeting a number of subjects were discussed including:

- Number of students taking FYE courses
- Number of professors teaching FYE courses
- Marketing of the program to students
- Which Success Factors were being introduced into the courses
- Issues of assessment
- Issues of course scheduling
- Issues of making sure all new students take the required number of FYE courses

During this semester's November meeting of the Team, Provost Rinker provided another update and a good overview of the program's conceptual base, current standing and issues yet to be worked out in year two and three of the program. Provost Rinker did describe some of the financial restrictions that may impact the FYE program as the University moves forward given projected state budget deficits for the next two academic years.

The Team recommended that the FYE program be assessed after the end of year two (at least in a preliminary manner) so that both students and faculty can reflect upon their experiences and the value of the program. The Team also asked that the list of student success factors be reexamined in the future, possibly replacing some of the existing elements with others that focus on such issues as time management, navigating the advisement system, career development and “getting connected”.

Because FYE programs are designed to help new students successfully navigate the transition from high school to college all agreed that the program is a valuable addition to the University’s curricular offerings. When students have a positive first year they are much more likely to persist through graduation and for this reason the FYE program is closely linked to issues of student engagement. The Team would be more than interested in helping to ensure the FYE program thrives and is successful.

Initiative #2: Developing programs that encourage pride and cooperative efforts among faculty, students and staff.

During the November meeting, the Team invited Mr. Edmund Breitling, graduate student and current President of the Student Government Association. The purpose of this meeting was to gain a student perspective on how best to create programs that bring together faculty, students and staff in ways that build a sense of community and pride on the campus. Many suggestions and ideas were discussed but a number of these seemed consistent with other ideas expressed throughout the Strategic Plan. These included the following:

- More extensive use of the Campus Mascot during events
- Campus Clean Up Days
- Expand West Conn Wednesdays
- Optimize use of Common Hour to begin Spring 2009 (Wednesdays at Noon)
- Bring together a wider group of students, faculty and staff during Orientation programs
- Conduct Community Forums around a range of topics (Civility, Ethics, Freedom of Speech, and Diversity)
- More extensive involvement of Clubs and Organizations (e.g. sponsorship of Campus Pride Days, etc.)
- Faculty/Staff Mentoring programs (outside of formal advisement channels-voluntary!)
- Better integration of Athletic programs and student athletes into the mainstream of campus life

The idea of asking faculty (on a voluntary basis) to mentor students for one year was enthusiastically endorsed by the group. During the Spring a formal plan/proposal will be developed by the Team to describe how such a program might work with possible implementation in Fall 2009.

Other plans for the spring 2009 semester included planning for Spring Clean Up Day programs, conducting at least one campus Forum and looking at how to better integrate athletics into campus life.

Please find attached a copy of the Team’s progress report for these and other initiatives.

**WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY
STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL #5 PROGRESS REPORT**

Timeline	5.1A: Work with FYE coordinator and faculty to include student support services in addition to academic emphasis	Actions/Progress	Measurable Outcomes	Issues/Concerns	5.1I: Develop programs that encourage pride and cooperative efforts between faculty and students (e.g. research day) and other activities that build spirit	Actions/Progress	Measurable Outcomes	Issues/Concerns
Initiative:				Initiative:				
Feb.-Mar. 2008	A. Meet with FYE coordinator and faculty who have taught the courses to learn more about program goals	a.1: Have invited Patty O'Neil to the meeting on 2/28 to share the program goals	M1. How do the key success factors help FYE Students	#1. The issues related to assessment of the FE program and its impact on students should be explored	A. Organize a campus wide forum (with SGA) to discuss meaning of community e.g. what does it mean to be a living and learning community? How does this relate to campus pride-civility etc?	a.1. Plan to organize a campus wide forum with SGA to discuss meaning of community on campus with the program to be offered in either March or April	M1 Establish/Identify the meaning/objective of living and learning community	
April-June 2008	B. Identify academic and student success factors that are presently required in FYE courses	b.1.: Patty, O'Neil and two FYE faculty Robert Whittmore, and Wynn Wilcox attended the meeting on 3/28. The faculty shared their concerns on FYE program. The expected academic	M2. Course completion rate comparison		B. Develop a list of all current activities on campus that could build support for major campus wide pride initiatives.	b.1. Develop a list of all current activities on campus that could build support for major campus wide pride initiatives	M2. Develop campus activities based on the inputs from students/staff/faculty	
	C. Interview students who have completed FYE courses				C. Showcase residential life programs-CULTURE-programs that might involve faculty (faculty fellows), faculty-in-residence and theme housing (use Open House, Orientation and other programs to showcase residential life. Explore feasibility of establishing faculty-in-residence and	c.1. Explore feasibility of establishing faculty-in-residence and theme housing programs for Fall 2008	M3. Measure student participation/attendance	
	D. Make recommendations regarding changes in student success factor elements for							