First in 2009 Initiatives
First-Year Experience Committee

“Choice Matters”
(A Powerful Partnership for First-Year Experiences)

May 1, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

Committee Charge
The First Year Experience Committee is a subcommittee of the First in 2009 Coordinating Council. In January 2002, Provost Ronald Crutcher and Dean Pamela Fox (chair of the First in 2009 Coordinating Council) charged the committee to:

*Explore ways to enhance the holistic First-Year Experience, connecting existing programs and strengthening the interaction between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs. Through campus dialogue, identify some priorities for short-term enhancements and some longer-term suggestions for potential new and expanded programs.*

Rather than simply generate a list of priorities, the committee decided to create a larger model or framework for enhancing the intellectual experiences for first-year Miami students that focuses on key themes or goals which span and link students’ in-class and out-of-class experiences. The framework draws from relevant theories of students’ intellectual development as well as professional research that defines best practices for the first-year experiences throughout the nation and on this campus. Priorities listed in this report flow out of this framework.

Rationale
In 1999, President James Garland created an ambitious set of goals designed to help Miami University become a premier undergraduate university by 2009. Goals three and four of this “First-in 2009” plan are to develop a curriculum for the twenty-first century and to strengthen academic standards and enrich campus intellectual and cultural life. As a way of meeting those goals, Provost Crutcher and the First in 2009 Coordinating Council identified the first-year undergraduate experience as one tangible area where many assets currently exist which can be readily built upon and strengthened to advance the overall intellectual climate of the campus.

Miami boasts an impressive array of successful and innovative first-year initiatives: a long-lasting summer reading program, a focus on liberal education, an expanding honors program, some existing first-year seminars, theme learning communities, residentially-based courses and advising as well as many leadership development and involvement opportunities in student organizations. Yet, in recent years, some concern has been expressed that the many extracurricular and co-curricular opportunities offered to entering Miami students have distracted them from focusing sufficiently on intellectual and academic learning. In addition, concerns have been raised that first-year courses, particularly the Miami Plan Foundation courses, have not been as demanding or challenging as they could be. Possible reasons may include a combination of the following factors: (1) most faculty and other instructional staff have had little or no development in teaching first-year students or Miami Plan Foundation courses; (2) the grade distribution for MPF courses has been slowly rising over the past decade; (3) over 50% of Miami Plan Foundation courses are taught by graduate assistants and casual faculty; and (4) the average enrollment for most Miami Plan Foundation courses is 45-50, and over 100 courses have enrollments over 75.:

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1 The committee recognizes that most graduate students and casual faculty are excellent teachers. However, because they turn over more rapidly and often receive less development on teaching, they may not be as well versed in or committed to the Miami Plan principles.
In a study on student expectations about learning, Karen and Karl Schilling report that “At Miami University, . . . we have found that most incoming students report expecting to spend thirty to forty hours a week in academic pursuits” (4). Yet, by spring of their first year, “a thirty-hour-per-week schedule was modal, with decreases in the number of students experiencing a forty-hour week and increases in the number of students reporting that they worked twenty or fewer hours per week on academic work” (8). Because expectations about learning and college life are often set in students’ first undergraduate semester, it is imperative that faculty, staff and administrators collaborate to deepen first-year students’ learning and send them clear and consistent messages about the importance of intellectual challenge and academic life.

The “Choice Matters” report aims to raise the intellectual standards and enrich campus intellectual and cultural life for first-year Miami students. To do this, students must be challenged to deepen learning in all facets of their lives—in their courses as well as their other collegiate experiences.

**Background Principles**

In 1998, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) joined forces to create a report on student learning entitled “Powerful Partnerships.” Drawing from research and practice, this report argues that learning is a multifaceted complex process, one that must be approached inside and outside the classroom. Learning is:

1. fundamentally about making and maintaining connections (among concepts, theories, courses, experiences, and people);
2. enhanced by taking place in the context of a compelling intellectual situation that balances challenge and opportunity;
3. an active, intellectual search for meaning by the learner;
4. a developmental and cumulative process involving the whole person (cognitive, social and affective dimensions);
5. done by individuals who are intrinsically tied to others as social beings;
6. strongly affected by the educational climate in which it takes place;
7. dependent upon frequent and honest feedback;
8. formal and informal, sometimes taking place in casual contacts with faculty and peers;
9. grounded in particular contexts and individual experiences, requiring effort to transfer knowledge and skills to other settings;
10. dependent upon learners monitoring and reflecting upon their own learning.

The American Association for Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) recently advanced a vision for higher education entitled “Greater Expectations” which foregrounds many of the same principles of learning promoted by the Powerful Partnerships model. According to this vision, learning “builds cumulatively and emerges through intensive engagements during a student’s entire education, so links are important . . . throughout the college years, among courses, between general education and the major, between traditional in-class and experiential learning, between formal and informal settings” (iv).

Our general vision for the first-year experience—and specifically the integrated relationship or partnership among curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programming to advance academic learning—is founded upon these tenets. In order for the first-year experience of Miami’s students to be enhanced, it is important that the entire Miami community embraces this vision of learning.
General Vision Overview

Relying upon the “Powerful Partnerships” and “Greater Expectations” principles, we propose an integrated vision of learning for first-year students at Miami, one that promotes intellectual challenge as well as explicit and purposeful connections among parts of the curriculum and between the curriculum and other aspects of the collegiate experience.

To do this, faculty, administrators, and staff must communicate regularly with one another and collaborate to challenge students to engage in rigorous academic and intellectual inquiry. They must be well versed in the special challenges and developmental needs of a diverse body of first-year students and must be supported in their efforts. Clear, consistent, and reinforcing messages about high learning expectations must be given inside and outside the classroom.

Because Miami boasts a wide range of learning opportunities for students inside and outside the formal classroom, it is important that students learn to make purposeful choices about which experiences they will pursue, choices that are in keeping with their educational goals and personal values and that simultaneously encourage them to grow in new ways. Thus, we encourage all first-year programs to reinforce the following themes or methods:

- Set high expectations about learning for yourself and others
- Make purposeful decisions and focused use of time and resources
- Take risks to promote learning in a diverse and complicated world
- Work with others to deepen your understanding of self
- Integrate and reflect critically on knowledge gained from diverse experiences.

We challenge each first-year program or unit to reflect on how they can use their program to help students build linkages between their intellectual/curricular learning and their out-of-class learning experiences and to pursue the five methods listed above. (See Appendix A for conceptual model summary, Appendix B for a timeline of FYE priorities, and Appendix C for a list of current first-year programs and proposed enhancements.)

In addition to challenging students to pursue these five themes, it is also important that faculty, staff and administrators also strive to meet these five goals. In order to achieve an intellectually vibrant first-year experience for students, faculty, staff and administrators must be willing to make difficult (and sometimes unpopular) decisions, push themselves to raise the standards they hold for students as well as for themselves, try out some new approaches and ideas, collaborate and communicate with others across departments and divisions, and regularly assess their own performance.

Committee’s Method of Research

In order to develop this vision, committee members, along with the assistance of members of the 2009 Coordinating Council and other university faculty and staff, engaged in the following research:

- Site visits to three institutions, University of Virginia, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Duke University. The individuals who conducted site visits paid particular attention to the ways these institutions have instituted their first-year seminars. See Appendix D for the protocol followed and Appendix E for reports of site visits.
- Consultations with Dr. Karen Schilling and Dr. Marcia Baxter Magolda, each of whom have considerable expertise in student intellectual development and the first-year experience.
Review of relevant professional literature, especially the theoretical ideas advanced by John Gardner, Marcia Baxter Magolda, Karen and Karl Schilling, the “Powerful Partnerships” model (AAHE), and Anna Ortiz and Robert Rhoads. See bibliography in this report.

Interviews of key stakeholders on this campus, including Liberal Education Council, faculty members teaching highly demanded Miami Plan Foundation courses, Office of Admission, Office of Residence Life, and Student Counseling Services. See Appendix F for guiding questions used in the interviews and Appendix G for summary reports of interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of completion</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 13-14, 2001</td>
<td>Benchmarking visit to Duke University by Lee Sanders, Bill Snavely, Jackie Elcik, Mike Leonakis (see report in Appendix E)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 18-19, 2001</td>
<td>Benchmarking visit to UNC, Chapel Hill by Denny Roberts, Paul Anderson, Kate Schaab (see report in Appendix E)</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 26, 2001</td>
<td>Benchmarking visit to University of Virginia by William Madison, III., Don Seymour, Burton Kaufman (see report in Appendix E)</td>
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<tr>
<td>January – February 2002</td>
<td>Review and discuss relevant professional literature and research. See bibliography.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 29, 2002</td>
<td>Meeting with two consultants, Karen Schilling and Marcia Baxter Magolda</td>
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<td>February 2002</td>
<td>Enlisted the assistance of other groups, such as First-Year Institute staff, the Student Leadership, Campus and Community Life staff, etc., to gather information and communicate our charge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2002</td>
<td>Interviewed or communicated with key stakeholders in the first-year experience. See list of guiding questions in interviews in Appendix F. See summaries of interviews in Appendix G.</td>
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<td>April 2002</td>
<td>Generate a model or framework for integrating Student and Academic Affairs in order to enhance the first-year experience. Identify clear learning outcomes as well as plan for assessment. Incorporate existing programs and emphases that enhance the first-year experience, and relate them to the model.</td>
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<td>April 29, 2002 Retreat for FYE Committee</td>
<td>Identify some priorities for short-term and long-term enhancements, including the first-year seminar.</td>
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<td>May 1, 2002 COAD Retreat</td>
<td>Communicate findings with Council of Academic Deans and members of the First in 2009 Coordinating Council.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summer 2002</td>
<td>Communicate findings with other Academic and Student Affairs administrators, staff and faculty. Receive feedback, and make revisions. Allow administrators in each division to implement the enhancements.</td>
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**GOALS FOR THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE**

**For Students**

- Invest considerable time in your own and your peers’ academic learning. *Why did I come to college? Am I devoting enough time to my studies? Am I encouraging my peers to deepen their learning?* Challenge yourself to do the following:
  - Study at least two hours a week for every credit hour taken.
  - Visit at least one faculty member in office hours each semester.
- Participate actively in your classes. Attend every class, and come prepared to engage with the course material.
- Revise each of your papers substantially at least once.
- Get to know at least two people who come from a different cultural, racial, ethnic, religious background from your own.
- Attend at least three or four cultural events or public lectures each semester. Invite a friend to join you at one or more of them.
- Identify your educational goals, and make purposeful choices about your major, courses and extracurricular experiences to advance those goals. *Who am I? What do I value or stand for? Do I really need to double or triple major in order to achieve my educational goals? What one or two out-of-class interests or organizations do I wish to pursue?*
- Seek new challenges and take informed risks. *What new experiences do I wish to undertake? How can I meet and relate to people who are very different from myself? How do I make choices about the risks I will take and whether or not they will help me achieve my goals in learning?*
- Understand that knowledge is gained through making connections with faculty and other students and among different disciplines, courses, and experiences. *How do my courses and other experiences relate to one another? What kinds of relationships do I want to create with others? Have I tried to get to know other students and faculty members in meaningful, intellectual ways?*

### For Faculty
- Set high expectations for learning in your courses. *Have I made my expectations for learning clear to students? Am I challenging them sufficiently to achieve their best? How can I ensure that students are discovering ideas and answers on their own? Have I included ample writing and reading assignments?* For example:
  - Establish clear grading and assessment criteria that are demanding. Reserve “A’s” for truly outstanding work.
  - Give writing assignments that ask students to think analytically.
  - Offer assignments that require students to use the library.
  - Incorporate ways to help students engage with the material actively. For example, in science courses, move beyond asking to students to memorize formulas and definitions to asking them to use the scientific method.
  - Give challenging enough assignments that students will need to revise them substantively at least once in order to receive a good grade.
  - Offer students graded and ungraded assignments to allow them to try out new ideas and approaches.
  - Invite students to make connections among disciplines, to think critically about the course subject matter and discipline, and to appreciate the value of a liberal education.
  - Promote respect among learners, and cultivate students’ understanding of diversity
- Reflect critically on your own teaching and students’ learning. *Have I solicited feedback and ideas from students on the assignments, discussion topics, and other course components?*
- Enhance the role that the Miami Plan principles play in your courses, even in the large-enrollment ones. *How can I encourage students to think critically, engage with other learners, understand contexts, and reflect and act? Are there other faculty in my department or elsewhere that I might consult to help me improve in these areas?*
• Develop a supportive relationship with students; challenge them to learn inside and outside the classroom. Am I aware of what it is like to be a first-year student today? How can that understanding inform my teaching? How can I interact meaningfully with students inside and outside the classroom? How can I make sure that I am accessible and approachable to students?

• Encourage yourself and students to take risks and try out new ideas and challenges. Have I challenged myself to improve my teaching? Have I consulted others for ideas of how to enhance my teaching? Do I reward or punish students when they try out new ideas, take risks, or make mistakes?

• Partner with others on campus to deepen students’ learning. Have I taken the time to make connections with Student Affairs staff to help me deepen the learning of students in my courses?

**For Student Affairs Staff**

• Assist students in focusing their educational objectives and devoting time to their studies. Am I helping students to make purposeful choices? Am I sending students messages that reinforce academic learning? Am I helping students to view themselves as scholars and thinkers? Am I modeling and promoting the habits of lifelong learning?

• Encourage students to take meaningful risks and to encounter other people and ideas different from themselves. Am I enabling students to meet other students and people with different backgrounds and values?

• Help students to integrate and reflect critically on knowledge gained in different courses and experiences. How can I help students to see linkages among their in- and out-of-classroom experiences? How can I help students to see that multiple majors does not necessarily mean greater success?

• Partner with one another and with faculty to deepen curricular learning for students. Am I aware of the topics, concepts, and approaches promoted in students’ first-year courses? Have I taken the time to make connections with and offer resources to first-year faculty?

**For Administrators**

- Promote Miami as a site of challenging learning experiences and opportunities. Am I promoting the image of Miami as an academic and intellectual site to prospective and current students and faculty as well as alumni and Oxford community members? How can I encourage the Oxford community, alumni, students, staff, and faculty to advance academic learning?

- Support, reward and recognize first-year endeavors. Have I amply rewarded and recognized faculty and staff who dedicate significant time to the first-year experience? Have I allocated appropriate financial and human resources to this initiative? Have I provided opportunities to train staff and faculty to work well with first-year students?

- Work to build deep and meaningful partnerships among the academic and student affairs divisions and departments. How am I helping to promote understanding among different divisions? Am I supporting and enabling cross-disciplinary, cross-divisional learning initiatives?
ASSESSMENT FOR THE FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE
In order to ensure continual improvement, the First-Year Experience will be assessed on an ongoing basis. Assessment will include the practices listed below. The first three can be implemented immediately (some are already being done); the others will need planning by the Coordinator(s) of the First-Year Experience.

- Assessments of all Miami Plan Foundation courses (done with academic program review)
- Student evaluations of first-year seminars and seminar instructors (narrative and quantitative)
- Faculty evaluations of first-year seminars and students (one-page narrative)
- Online survey questionnaire to be completed by first-year students at the end of their second semester
- Electronic portfolios of students’ best work; administered by the First-Year Experience Office.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books and Journal Articles


Reports


Report of the AD Hoc Committee on Advising, Miami University. (October 1999).

Site Visit Reports from the Greater Expectations Committee, Miami University (Fall 2001).

Student Assessment and Expectations Final Report, Miami University. (May 2000).

APPENDIX A: Conceptual Model for the First-Year Experience
APPENDIX B: Short- and Long-Term Strategic Objectives
These can be found in another file.
APPENDIX C: Table of Current First-Year Opportunities and Proposed Enhancements
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Current Opportunities Offered</th>
<th>Suggested Enhancements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior year of high school — fall of senior year of high school</td>
<td>Admission publications</td>
<td>Review and revise to relate to “Choice Matters” goals</td>
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<td>Alumni recruiting efforts</td>
<td>Expand efforts</td>
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<td>Information sessions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Campus tours</td>
<td>Include anecdotes about student and faculty research/intellectual activity</td>
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<td>Contact with admissions staff in high schools and college fairs</td>
<td>Make sure that admission staff is committed to intellectual challenge and familiar with the themes of “Choice Matters.”</td>
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<td>Departmental visits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Red Carpet Days</td>
<td>Modify or rework to include more messages about academic challenge and more faculty.</td>
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<td>Preview Days</td>
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<td>Overnight hosting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Harrison Scholarship Weekends</td>
<td>Consider expanding the # of students brought on campus; more faculty-student contact</td>
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<td>Multicultural Leadership Program</td>
<td>Work with CAWC to create more programming.</td>
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<td>Website</td>
<td>Create a special FYE website</td>
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<td>January 31- May 1 of senior high school year</td>
<td>Open Houses</td>
<td>Include more info about library, intellectual/academic activity</td>
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<td>Departmental Visits</td>
<td>Devis a better communication sequence for high ability students. Include more involvement from UHP. Continue exploring options for increasing contact with prospective students earlier.</td>
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<td>Phonathon</td>
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<td>Correspondence from admission and departments</td>
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<td>Online Chats</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Overnight Hosting Programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Selection of Theme Learning Community</td>
<td>Include a “TLC” fair in open houses for accepted students.</td>
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<td>Student Financial Aid Package</td>
<td>Find a way to let students know about all of their financial aid at the time of admission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1-beginning of fall semester</td>
<td>Summer Orientation</td>
<td>Include “educational goals” form in packet; reinforce Choice Matters goals. Increase faculty attendance.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“M” book</td>
<td>Reinstate it, and include more intellectual matters in it.</td>
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<td>Summer Reading Program</td>
<td>Plan 3 years in advance.</td>
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<td>Course Registration</td>
<td>Set aside special seats/sections for first-year students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
<td>Find a way to focus on learning goals, rather than simply course scheduling. More faculty involvement.</td>
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<td>Explore Publication (formerly First Things First)</td>
<td>Include more messages about intellectual challenge and the “Choice Matters” themes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre FYI and FYI</td>
<td>Challenge deans to identify faculty to present lectures/workshops on the summer reading book themes. Include more free time for students to explore the campus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence hall opening</td>
<td>Make sure FY advisors and staff members are educated about “Choice Matters” themes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convocation</td>
<td>Plan the speaker and book 3 years in advance; create curricular, co-curricular programs around book. Invite speaker back at this cohort’s graduation 4 years later.</td>
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<tr>
<td>First day of class- end of first semester</td>
<td>ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE ACADEMIC LIFE</td>
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<tr>
<td>First class meetings</td>
<td>Set high expectations on the very first day of class. Challenge students with writing and reading.</td>
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<td>Syllabi</td>
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<td>Various fairs for student organizations, service opportunities, majors</td>
<td>Create one coordinated &quot;mega&quot; fair that encompasses all of these opportunities and incorporates advising on “Choice Matters” themes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term grades</td>
<td>Discuss grading criteria with students. Make it clear that only outstanding work receives an “A.”</td>
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<td>Grades</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean’s List and President’s List</td>
<td>Reduce the number of students on these lists so that it is truly meaningful to be there.</td>
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<td>Co-Curricular offerings</td>
<td>Connect residence hall programming with first-year courses more fully. Involve more faculty in residence hall programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme Learning Communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring course scheduling/advising</td>
<td>FY advisors should focus on developmental needs of student in addition to helping with course scheduling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with faculty outside of class</td>
<td>Challenge students to go to at least one faculty member’s office hours each semester. Challenge faculty to find meaningful ways of interacting with students outside of class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>First-Year Seminars (WCP, Honors)</td>
<td>Expand the offerings to more students. Make it optional.</td>
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<td>Corridor meetings, hall councils</td>
<td>Create a set of community values a learning outcomes in each hall that reinforce learning.</td>
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<td>Student Leadership Conference</td>
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<td>Second semester</td>
<td>Syllabi</td>
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<tr>
<td>SUSTAINING ACADEMIC HABITS</td>
<td>Probationary intervention</td>
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<td>Academic Recognition Banquet</td>
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<td>Honor Societies</td>
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<td>Co-curricular offerings</td>
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<td>First-Year Seminars (ENG 112, WCP, Honors)</td>
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<td>Dean’s List and President’s List</td>
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<td>Newspaper Readership Program</td>
<td>Challenge students to attend at least 3 of these each semester.</td>
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APPENDIX D: Stakeholder Interview Guiding Questions
Guiding Questions for the Stakeholder Interviews

- How would you describe the typical first-year student at Miami’s Oxford campus?

- Do you think that there exists a balance between curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in most first-year students’ lives?

- [Share the chart created by Jeannie Brown-Leonard of the various existing first-year experience opportunities.] Have we left anything out of the chart that should be there? What do you see as the biggest strengths of Miami’s current first-year experience?

- What areas do you see as most needing improvement?

- What do you think a student should be required or encouraged to do or experience in his/her first year of college?

- What do you think that the learning goals or objectives of a first-year student should be? What might be some guiding questions that a student might consider during the first year?

- What do you see as the most serious obstacles to the implementation of a successful first-year experience? How do you think that they can be overcome?

- Some other universities concerned with improving the first-year experience have instigated a number of different initiatives, including first-year seminars. What is your opinion of Miami offering a first-year seminar taught by faculty from a variety of departments? What should the nature of the collaboration between student and academic affairs be?

- What advice or recommendations do you have for us?
APPENDIX E: Summary Reports of Stakeholder Interviews
College Composition Faculty and Administrators
(Diana Royer)
FYE Stakeholder Interview
March 21, 2002

1. How would you describe the typical first-year student at Miami's Oxford campus?
   I've only taught one section of 111 up here (this fall), but I'd describe most of them as
   highly motivated both to do well on the assignments and to earn that good grade. They
   seem open to learning new things, exploring subject areas that are new to them. Most are
   career-driven, having a particular career in mind when they enter college.

2. Do you think that there exists a balance between curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular
   activities in most first-year students' lives?
   Absolutely. They try to juggle it all, to do well in their studies, take advantage of campus
   events and organizations, and have a social life.

3. Look at the chart created by Jeannie Brown-Leonard of the various existing first-year
   experience opportunities. (attached) Have we left anything out of the chart that should be there?
   What do you see as the biggest strengths of Miami's current first-year experience?
   Something Honors does is have current Miami students contact incoming students, a one-
   on-one contact that offers the incoming student a particular student contact when they get
   to Miami. Mary Cayton could tell you more about it, but I think it's done via letter and
   email.
   
   I personally think the summer reading program is a big strength and have worked hard in
   my brief time here to get the book used more in 111-112.

4. What areas do you see as most needing improvement?
   I think students are overwhelmed by orientation, but I'm not sure what can be done to
   improve that program, given the time constraints.

5. What do you think a student should be required or encouraged to do or experience in his/her
   first year of college?
   I think it's extremely important that students get to a cultural event--art museum, speaker,
   film series, play, musical performance, etc--in their first year, first semester if possible.
   That's encouraged when developing 111-112 syllabi. Honors does it more formally with
   their faculty mentoring program.

6. What do you think that the learning goals or objectives of a first-year student should be?
   What might be some guiding questions that a student might consider during the first year?
   Learning goals/objectives: Learn how to balance the school work with the other
   activities so the work doesn't suffer. Take advantage of the outside-of-classroom
   support instructors provide (office hours, email contact) to maximize learning and
   intellectual inquiry.
Guiding questions:
Look at your education as an overall experience rather than a series of separate endeavors divided class by class. Seek the overarching connections among classes and the critical thinking, writing, discussion that occurs in them.

7. What do you see as the most serious obstacles to the implementation of a successful first-year experience? How do you think that they can be overcome?
Serious obstacles: student investment—seeing the importance of every aspect of the first-year experience, including summer reading, all of orientation, taking advising advice, attending all class meetings. How to overcome that? Some of it has to do with student personalities, over which we have no control. But our delivery of orientation sessions and training of advisors is something we can control and should ensure is top notch. (i.e., students complain about "boring" sessions they have to attend at orientation. I'm sure a survey is done, right? What sessions do they least value, and how could they be improved?)

8. Some other universities concerned with improving the first-year experience have instigated a number of different initiatives, including first-year seminars. What is your opinion of Miami offering a first-year seminar taught by faculty from a variety of departments? What should the nature of the collaboration between student and academic affairs be?
This issue came up in conversation today re: the first-year seminar. I believe there's some concern in administration about 112 counting as the seminar since it's taught primarily by graduate students. If courses across the curriculum were to be instigated as first-year seminars, would that jeopardize 112? I'm rather uninformed on this issue, so that's about all I could say.

Summary of conversation with Current Asst. Director of Composition (Brenda Helmbrecht, a graduate student).

Student bring to Miami some negatives like “wardrobe” and “a tendency toward conformity.” Some are quickly overwhelmed by their courses and need time management skills. After a couple of months, they get into the swing of things.

Some are used to being passive in school so they are not always ready for the expectation to participate actively in class. They don’t always take responsibility for the class dynamic.

I think they’re adequately challenged, but overwhelmed at times by their choice to go to class or not. They sometimes abuse this and encounter different sorts of classroom consequences. (their attendance is no longer mitigated by their parents’ involvement.)

I’ve had good experience with Honors students in the first-year honors dorm, but expectations that reflect their honors designation may be a factor there.
I generally think the dorm sections are positive. There are some negatives, of course, but when they work, they’re a good idea. They offer different sort of chances to talk for students—before
paper workshops, in group projects. When it goes badly, it’s generally because discussion hasn’t been a clear theme or because they are not being fully honest in favor of politeness.

I think the summer reading program is a good idea but the “frat parade” on the walk down to Millett contradicts the goals of the program pretty badly. No upper class students seem to participate, so it begins to look like something only first year students have to do.

I think the summer reading program outcomes could be more intensive. Say, for instance, have students work on the book for a day or two and prepare them rather than only reflect after the talk. An instructor and their peers could be more effective and meaningful. As it is now, they talk to a stranger who they probably never see again after that short book discussion.

My own college orientation happened in an intensive week before classes began. We had three-hour courses daily, read a book together and met with faculty and students before official classes began. We had some of that time to get over the conflicts about laundry and life. A climate was able to develop and friendships formed earlier.

I’ve worked some in the learning center with Linda Dixon and with SEP students’ group orientation. The work seemed fun and exciting. During orientation these students seem to identify together.

My goals for student in their first year: manage time, develop a confident voice, express themselves, take a stand on some public argument.

Of course the time management stuff is quite structured for the students who have those ‘calendars’ for their outside of class activities. Some seem to have more trouble scheduling their time for class oriented work. Smaller classes might help students work out this with their peers earlier.

Additions to the chart:

- Sit in on a class before they come and/or during orientation
- We may need to think about how much our “beautiful campus” is in competition with an “intellectual draw” for students.
- Tours for prospective students might focus more on classrooms and the library than on the rec center and other social sites. I wonder what messages those tour guides really send.

I know there’s a lot of peer and parent pressure conflicts during the orientation time. I don’t think those interactions with faculty at orientation are very effective, somehow. That may be hard to change, but students need to find out that faculty are people too.

We might be able to set up some 111/112 (composition) Q and A sessions with 50 or so students. They could hand in their questions and avoid being singled out when they speak up in orientation.
Might it be good to meet the community of Oxford and be welcomed by the town (a picnic?)

OR are we trying to do too much with the incoming students? Perhaps we are over programming them and reinforcing a passive approach to their college experience.

Guiding questions:

What’s the value in thinking, how might being a thinker be valuable?
What’s the use of knowledge that’s not immediately applied?
What’s the value in knowing how to ask a question?

Other issues:
Media/Music/Film/Print…. How do these intersect and how am I affected by them?
How is an identity formed? How has mine been formed? Do I like how it’s coming out?
What sort of things really engage me? What part of that is academic? What effects might this engagement have on my life?

Facilitated by Jennie Dautermann
The interview with the King Library instructional staff lasted approximately 45 minutes. The librarians were eager to discuss the first-year experience. Rather than focusing on the broader university, the discussion centered almost entirely on the ways the library contributes or would like to impact students’ first year experience. The staff stressed that one of the key ways the library can help more first-year students is to overcome some of their and the faculty’s misperceptions or negative perceptions about the library.

Students—and particularly first-year students—envision the library as a “museum of books,” rather than a living, evolving site of information and resources. In other words, the term “library” has an unfortunate stigma which librarians must overcome. Thus, the librarians have found that they have better luck attracting students to the library by emphasizing some the technology-based services and resources that they offer and by using terms like “technology,” “information services,” or the “Internet” in their promotional materials and programming. They have also found that if they can get students into the library early in their experience at Miami, students are much more likely to use the library throughout their undergraduate careers. Similarly, if faculty (from the moment they are hired) take advantage of the instructional services of the library, then they will tend to do so throughout their career here. Thus, it is important that the library find ways to attract and familiarize students and faculty to their facilities and resources.

Recruitment

- Currently, the library participates in Open Houses by setting up a table in Millett Hall which prospective students and their parents can visit. Although this is helpful, the librarians would like to play a more pivotal role in these open houses. For example, they would like to give a five-minute presentation in the main presentation that the President and/or Provost gives to all students. This would signal to incoming students the importance of research on our campus.
- They expressed gratitude that the campus tour now includes a stop at the library. Including a mention or stop at the other branch libraries (especially when prospective students in that group express an interest in a field that a branch library specializes in) would be even more helpful.

First-Year Institute

- The staff now offers a presentation during FYI. They would love to have the library give a presentation or intriguing workshop to these incoming students at a time when there aren’t so many other activities going on.
First-Year Curriculum

- The library is interested in making connections with all faculty members. They have set up a liaison program in which one librarian is assigned to each department to help them integrate information technology and other library resources into their teaching and research.
- They also offer faculty workshops on such topics as Internet security, plagiarism, search strategies, etc.
- Finally, they have the Kamm Instructional Room that faculty and librarians can use with small classes to help them gain skills in searching and other information literacy skills. When faculty teach large courses, it is difficult or impossible for them to bring their entire class to the library. Currently, the librarians are developing an online tutorial service for students which could be used particularly by faculty teaching large classes.
- They would like to develop a faculty learning community through CELT or offer a presentation to new faculty on the library services and to provide them with assistance on integrating information technology into their syllabus in meaningful ways.
- They also thought it might be good for us to consider finding ways to ensure that students gain competency in information literacy. Could it be a part of a portfolio requirement or integrated into the Miami Plan more fully?

Facilitated and summarized by Carolyn Haynes
Liberal Education Council  
FYE Stakeholder Interview  
Tuesday, February 26, 2002

The conversation with Liberal Education Council was a lively one, lasting almost one hour. It primarily centered on first-year initiatives that are spearheaded by the Office of Liberal Education: the summer reading program, Miami Plan Foundation courses, and first-year seminars. Below is a summary of remarks made about each of these three initiatives.

Summer Reading Program

- Council members would like to see the summer reading book more integrally integrated into the curriculum and co-curriculum. Student members noted that the book was not discussed after the initial summer reading discussion and was not integrated into their ENG 111 course.
- One member suggested that LEC offer awards or recognition to faculty members who do an outstanding job of incorporating the book into their courses or to student organizations or student affairs groups who make use of the book in challenging and inventive ways.
- Others pointed out that this integration into the curriculum might be easier if the book was selected further in advance. Perhaps books could be decided up to three years in advance so that lots of programming could be developed around the book’s themes. Several remarked that this advanced planning was done successfully with the Latin American Celebration a few years ago. Latin American themes infiltrated the curriculum, cultural events, co-curricular events, etc.
- A final suggestion was made that the speaker for the convocation (usually the author of the summer reading book) also be asked back to speak at those students’ commencement ceremony four years later.

Miami Plan Foundation Courses

- Some of the student members noted that many of their foundation courses lacked sufficient challenge. They ended up not studying as much as they thought they would need to do.
- Faculty members seemed less convinced that the Miami Plan Foundation experience was not working. Perhaps it simply takes students several years to appreciate the value of a liberal education.
- All members seemed to think that faculty could be better trained to teach large classes in more interactive, challenging ways. The same is true of seminar teaching. Faculty members need development in how to facilitate seminars in effective, challenging ways. Retreats on teaching large classes or small classes and teaching liberal education would be beneficial.
- Others pointed out that it is important to consider who is teaching MPF courses. Often it is new faculty, adjuncts or graduate students who have less experience teaching and who are in the most vulnerable position with respect to student evaluations. As a result, they may not be challenging students enough.
- Several members felt that the reason why students were not being challenged in their first-year courses is that they are not able to get the courses they really want to take. They are closed out of huge numbers of courses. As a result, they settle for classes that may not be well suited to their present needs. One member recommended that the university set aside
entire sections or a large number of seats in highly demanded courses that are truly for first-year students. Seniors should be discouraged from taking MPF courses.

- Another reason why students might not be challenged in MPF courses is that they are in majors with “lock-step” curricula. Thus, they are told which MP courses to take. They have little choice. Thus, they may be in courses they are not naturally interested in pursuing.
- Several members suggested that advisors could be better trained at helping students select more challenging courses and helping them understand the value of liberal education courses. Faculty could be better informed as well.

First-Year Seminars

- LEC members believe that first-year seminars would be highly valuable for students, but they expressed skepticism that it could be done well due to budget constraints. It would take many new faculty members to offer a truly innovative, challenging first-year seminar experience to all students.
- As a more cost-effective alternative, they proposed that one- and two-credit courses (such as those done in the theme learning communities, e.g., IDS 153, IDS 151) be made more rigorous and count for a first-year seminar experience.

Facilitated and summarized by Carolyn Haynes
Assistant Deans of Academic Divisions
FYE Stakeholder Interview

1. How would you describe the typical first-year student at Miami’s Oxford campus?
   - White upper-middle class female
   - Strong high school student, recent graduate from Ohio
   - They are in college because it is expected of them
   - Status conscious
   - Used to success
   - Expecting not to do in on their own (may not take notes)
   - Not ready to make decisions, or don’t think they are

2. Do you think there exists a balance between curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in most first-year students’ lives?
   - The co-curricular suffers most in the first year
   - Some get too involved, others hold back
   - The “right way” is to be a leader, and leadership means extra-curricular, to them.
   - Contact with one single faculty member is important in keeping them here.

3. The first year experience:
   - MU creates a passive student, doesn’t empower them—doesn’t allow students to influence what happens (policies), so they sit back
   - The way we treat parents at Orientation creates a disconnect—we give all that information to parents but the responsibility to the students!
   - The intellectual climates are different in the South and East quads (more TLCs in East.)
   - One of the strengths is how we work with the undecided student; another is that we have more faculty involved in recruitment now, so it is more academically oriented; the TLCs are a strength (but need assessment!)
   - Overall the first year is strong.
   - Having newspapers in the dining halls is a great idea—it is intellectual involvement.

4. Improvement needed where?
   - How do we get them to be less passive, and take more responsibility?
   - Each student needs to have a meaningful positive interaction with faculty.
   - Academic advising is tied to resources—the first year advisor position is impossible given the tasks required!

5. What do you think a student should be required or encouraged to do or experience in his/her first year of college?
   - There was a general feeling against requirements, other than within a course.
   - Could parents at orientation have the opportunity to give a gift of a performance to their student at a discount? Or raffle off some tickets!
   - Community service/service learning; cultural sensitivity is needed here.
   - Experience difference in some way—a different culture.
6. What do you think that the learning goals or objectives of a first-year student should be? What might be some guiding questions that a student might consider during the first year?

- Have you learned something inside your major?
- Have you learned something outside your major?
- Have you learned something different?
- Have you learned some balance?
- Have you made connections in your major department? Socially?
- Do you know your strengths, weaknesses, ways to improve?
- Are you interacting with people on the all or are you mostly alone?
- Can you budget time? Are you in control of your life?
- Am I trying to please my parents? Or beginning to be independent?
- How is my relationship with my parents changing as I move into adulthood?

7. What do you see as the most serious obstacles to the implementation of a successful first-year experience? How do you think they can be overcome?

- Resources! Hiring professional advisors would require money; getting more faculty involvement would require money for release time.
- Do we have a commitment to teaching? Is it consistent across the university?
- How do we support faculty to do teaching? To deal with conflicts between the discipline and pedagogy?

Facilitated by Lee Sanders
Dr. Mark Smith, Chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics  
FYE Stakeholder Interview

How would you describe the typical first-year student at Miami’s Oxford campus?
• Bright, enthusiastic, with considerable intellectual potential
• Used to getting good grades and participating in activities beyond the classroom
• Unsure about academic expectations in college
• Not acclimated to working hard at academic pursuits

Do you think there exists a balance between curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in most first-year students’ lives?
• Not a good balance—they don’t spend much time on their course work (evidence = their performance in beginning math courses)
• Not really engaged in the academic challenge
• Are they challenged enough in their first year courses?
• They spend excessive amounts of time watching TV, playing electronic games, surfing the WEB, in chat rooms (hypothesis only)
• They could spend more time in the gym, too!

What do you think a student should be required or encouraged to do or experience in his/her first year of college?
• No requirements
• They should be strongly encouraged to attend non-class lectures, concerts, diversity discussions, and ballgames
• They should be strongly encouraged to leave all televisions, electronic games at home, starting with messages at Summer Orientation! Even if we think it would do no good, speaking out about this would show that we strongly encourage an intellectual climate at MU that may differ from what they have known.

What do you think that the learning goals or objectives of a first-year student should be? What might be some guiding questions that a student might consider during the first year?
• Studying to learn the course material (rather than for a grade)
• Get involved in some academic activities outside of coursework—lectures and/or dept. student gatherings in major dept.
• How do you want your education to serve you five years from now?
• How do you want to be remembered by your professors at MU?
• How much work are you willing to put into YOUR education?
• What is your plan to properly balance curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities during your time at MU?
• What toolset and what mindset are you seeking through your college experience?

What do you see as the most serious obstacles to the implementation of a successful first-year experience? How do you think they can be overcome?
• Professors who don’t apparently challenge their students
• Too much TV, etc.
• Does MU have the mindset to change anything? We could if we wanted to.
• Hold the faculty accountable—financially penalize departments that give high grades too easily; take away tenure-track slots, give zero raises dept.-wide; reduce operating budgets. Do we have that degree of courage?
• Talk about post-tenure review of all faculty
• Focus on student attrition rather than student retention—look toward eliminating 25% of each incoming class by the second year
• Set a goal of 3100 students for each incoming class, with a total u.g. enrollment of about 11,000.
• Tear down a few of the old buildings that are no longer useful
• Get rid of a lot of mid-level administrators and put those salaries to increasing the number of faculty who actually teach and do research. (MP Foundation courses taught in sections of more than 50, and taught by casual faculty, are not the way to initiate a strong intellectual climate.)

What about first-year seminars?
• Why? We have lots of math courses for our student to take!
• Seminars in time management, goal setting and hard work are probably way too business-like for MU!
• St. Af. and Ac. Af. Need much greater cooperation! It’s good to see Admission and Financial Aid in Academic Affairs.
• Recruit a larger percentage of the first-year class from the top 10% of h.s. classes.
• Initiate a “no TV” rule!

Advice or recommendations?
• Think out of the box, even though it is risky.
• Talk to the ENG dept. and find out why over half the student in ENG 111 and 112 get As.
• Why are over 75% of the grades in the School of Fine Arts and SEAP As?
• If a faculty member is not a Level A faculty member, give them 3 years to get there or reduce their salary by $10,000.
• Dismiss every student who is found guilty of academic dishonesty or personal misconduct one time.
• Get rid of one-half of our administrators and put the money into more faculty lines.
• If we want to be different than we are, we must act different than we do now. Many faculty members want change, but they want the next person to do the changing.

Facilitated by Lee Sanders
CAS Dean’s Advisory Board
FYE Stakeholder Interview
3/18/02

Typical first-year student / experience:
- Superficial characteristics and background:
  - white, upper-middle class, raised in the suburbs, academically inclined, overly
  - involved in extra curricular activities in high school
  - It’s easy to “blend in” because a feeling of homogeneity exits within the student population
  - Attending college was an expectation (of both the student and parents)
  - Confirmed the notion that the first priority is to establish a social life (friends, extra-curricular involvement)
- Come to Miami expecting to devote more time and energy to academics than they find is actually necessary.
- Don’t feel like they’re being held accountable for the work. The classroom expectations are fairly low so students seek additional activities to compensate.
- Students place more emphasis on extra-curricular activities than curricular (note: they didn’t like the term co-curricular)
  - Class subject matter not interesting
  - Need to go to meeting, sense of importance and contribution
  - Extra-curricular- more passion, immediate goals and direction exist
  - Students don’t feel like they’re working toward a common goal in the classroom

Biggest Strengths:
- The learning communities on east quad
- Professors teaching lower level courses
- Social atmosphere, especially in the residence halls on east quad
- Miami students are excited about being here
- Student organizations and Greek life
- It’s easy (and desirable) to become an active and contributing member of the community
- One student mentioned that the first-year experience is “good, but not too good…otherwise, you wouldn’t have as much to look forward to later on”

Needs Improvement:
- According to the group, many students view their education (mostly Miami Plan but requirements for the major as well) as a check list. One student observed “it shouldn’t be about checking boxes; they [in reference to their peers] just don’t get it.”
- More intellectual approach to social activities (e.g. debates in residence halls, attending lectures and performances and discussing in class).
- Want contact with the best professors in first year.
- Stronger more active students need to help empower their peers. Help the “Nintendo kids have this experience”
- Advising - first-year students want advisors to give them all the answers
- Need to encourage a more self-reliant / self-directed mentality from the start
A large disparity seems to exist between the first-year experience for those students living on east and south quads their first year. The discussion revolved around the students’ experiences in their respective halls, and its affect academically and socially. Overall (a pure generalization based on the experience of ~12 students), those who resided on East quad had a more meaningful and successful first year.

Facilitated by Kate Schaab
The Honors Student Advisory Board had much to say about the first-year experience. The conversation lasted about 45 minutes, and everyone on the board contributed ideas. Many of their comments focused on their first-year experience in the University Honors Program. The upper-class students who entered prior to the creation of the new program were considerably less satisfied with their experience as first-year students than those who entered last year or this year. All expressed enthusiasm for the changes—especially those aimed at building an honors community—that Mary Cayton has implemented. Below is a summary of their comments:

**Summer Orientation**

- HSAB members felt that orientation was highly repetitive. In particular, they felt that there was too much abstract lecturing on the Miami Plan. They wanted more hands-on, active engagement with the issues surrounding registration.
- Interestingly, they all believed that orientation is really geared more towards parents. They recommend that there be much more separate programming for parents and for students. Parents end up serving as a distraction or impediment to students’ taking ownership of their educational plans.
- Some suggested that there be specialized advising for honors students during orientation.

**Summer Reading Program**

- HSAB members uniformly agreed that this is a great idea—but they differed on their feelings about the books chosen. Some thought the selections were superb; others felt that the books were geared more toward faculty interests rather than students’ interests. Still others did not like books with too many pictures and little substance. One suggested that more students be involved in the book selection. A few noted that selecting a book that also has a movie version of it is a good idea.
- They also felt that it is crucial to select a book whose author is a compelling speaker.

**First-Year Institute**

- Many of the HSAB members felt that the activities in FYI veered toward the “cheesy.” They felt it was too much “fun and games.” Although getting-to-know-you activities can be beneficial, they also think it would be good to allow entering students to have some free time to roam around campus, discover where their classes will be meeting, wander through the bookstore, etc. Perhaps requiring students to attend a select number of FYI events (rather than mandatory attendance at all of them) might be a solution.
- One student thought it would be good for honors to have their own FYI.
First-Year Advising/Residence Hall Experience

- HSAB felt that there is a need for specialized advising for high ability students. They felt that the first-year advisors in their hall did not have enough expertise to offer them the kind of guidance and advice they needed. Having a special honors advisor and/or better advising in the first-year honors residence hall would be highly beneficial.

- Those HSAB members who are Harrison Scholars expressed a strong desire to have a community among themselves. They had high praise for the efforts of Dr. Doug Shumavon who offered pre-matriculation e-chats, a special seminar and special community building events and activities for the Harrisons. It was helpful to have a sense of who their fellow Harrison scholars would be prior to coming to campus. They are saddened that Dr. Shumavon will not be continuing in this role, and they hope that a similar community-building endeavor will take place for Harrisons in the future.

- Several were concerned that the method for selecting roommates in your first year is problematic. They recommended that a longer, more detailed questionnaire be used so that roommates are matched in a more informed manner.

Curriculum

- All of the HSAB members found the Miami Plan Foundation courses to be much too easy. Some described them as “easier than high school.” They had planned to do much more work and be much more challenged. Interestingly, few of them blamed the professors for this problem. They felt that their peers often were not working to the best of their ability or were not well prepared for college-level work. As a result, professors are forced to slow down the pace to accommodate the bulk of these students. This was especially true of students who took ENG 111. Those who took ENG 113 found the experience much better. The one student who took the pilot version of the first-year honors core course (which meets Foundation I) was even more satisfied. All students were highly supportive of having the honors core course.

- On the whole, honors students were very pleased with the other honors courses (most of which meet MPF requirements), although a couple of students said one of their honors courses could have been more challenging.

Facilitated and summarized by Carolyn Haynes
The conversation with the Admission staff included the four senior administrators in the area. There was considerable anticipation of the meeting and a great deal of interest was expressed by all. Below is a summary of remarks made about each of these three initiatives.

**General background questions/answers:**
- Why were the specific benchmark schools chosen?
- Why not schools that are more comparable to Miami and are positioning themselves to compete with us? (i.e. OSU and Ohio)
- We may need to look at some of these others schools because they represent a very critical threat to our viability with talented students.
- In some ways, the admission and administrative alignment of these other schools makes it easier for them to hone an appeal and the program offerings necessary to attract and serve talented students.
- Miami’s problem is that the input about who we are, what we seek to be, and how to get there is very diffuse, resulting in a lack of clarity in our image.

**How would you describe the typical first-year student at Miami’s Oxford campus?**
- Affluent, worldly, confident, successful, involved, excited, sophisticated, cultured, intense, anxious, anticipatory, social, task-oriented, joiners/peer influenced, privileged in many ways, and leaders

**Do you think that there exists a balance between curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in most first-year students’ lives?**
- Staff were reluctant to comment much on first-year experience because their contact during that time is minimal.
- The message is that students should get involved at Miami.
- First year is a year of discovery and students settle out into a comfortable pattern for them.
- Students are concerned about managing their time in college.
- The actual classroom contact time is relatively minimal as compared to the expectation.
- Rigor and involvement varies by student experience and major.
- Low risk-taking behaviors are evident among first years. This is based on past success and wanting to remain successful.

[Share the chart created by Jeannie Brown-Leonard of the various existing first-year experience opportunities.] Have we left anything out of the chart that should be there?
- There needs to be more attention to rising high school seniors. When students are in the spring of their junior year or during the summer before their senior year, they are forming many impressions and expectations.
- Students’ visits to campus are key. These are sometimes formal and sometimes informal but both are important.
What do you see as the biggest strengths of Miami’s current first-year experience? What areas do you see as most needing improvement?

- Miami has pre-college sports experiences but this is a different view of who we are.
- The Theme Learning focus of the residence halls is a good sales point.
- Miami has no high-powered summer experiences for gifted students. This puts us at a disadvantage because our prospects have not had deep exposure to campus life through academics.
- The plethora of opportunity needs to be more focused.
- We have too much and it needs to be focused and intensified.
- Personal advising coupled with academic advising needs to be a routine student experience.
- Orienting new faculty to their role in creating a rigorous campus culture is needed.
- We need a way for students to gain a greater sense of the Miami community culture.

What do you think a student should be required or encouraged to do or experience in his/her first year of college?

- Expect student behavior that gets students out of their comfort zone.
- Require an external campus experience early on in their education – study abroad, service, work, or outward bound.
- All students should be required to have a cross-cultural experience.

What do you see as the most serious obstacles to the implementation of a successful first-year experience? How do you think that they can be overcome?

- Will the administration adopt and support a deeper and more substantive FYE approach?
- We’ve talked about this before. The models are good but the delivery is flawed.

Some other universities concerned with improving the first-year experience have instigated a number of different initiatives, including first-year seminars. What is your opinion of Miami offering a first-year seminar taught by faculty from a variety of departments? What should the nature of the collaboration between student and academic affairs be?

- Miami needs a common experience that connects all students with each other.
- Students should be accountable for the first-year reading and the topic should be integrated into other courses throughout the year.
- Reading lists should be prepared for various areas of academic study.

Facilitated and summarized by Denny Roberts
Description of First Year Students at Miami

- MU FY students come to college directly from high school and are traditional age. They are generally from the Midwest and are generally blonde and blue-eyed and white. They are usually well traveled compared to other students their own age.
- Parents of the MU student tend to be college educated and affluent with professional careers.
- They do not know how to make decisions and are used to their parents making the decisions for them. They lack critical thinking skills.
- The students are very grade conscious and performance/achievement oriented. They generally want the “best of everything” from clothes to service from the University.
- Student at MU are trying to find their niche at the University. Many are scared and nervous, and feel as though everyone else seems to know what they are doing. They become easily overwhelmed.

Activities of First Year Student at Miami

- The overall feeling was that first year students do a better job of balancing school with activities, in the sense that they do not become over involved, however they are not balanced as we would like to see them between curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular. They tend to “peak and valley” between the three types of activities throughout each semester, which overwhelms the students and also the faculty and staff expected to provide the services and the residence life staff to get them to all of the events. The second semester is heavily immersed with Greek recruitment for students who select this option.
- This leads to students feeling as though they do not have time for class, and they shift their priorities to other non-class activities, without a balance. Students are used to being programmed for and told where to be, that they do not know how to manage their time, since they are used to have so little time and decisions made for them on their time.
- The general feeling was that first year student are more selective in choosing activities, and then they become over involved sophomore year. However, the feeling was that some students are not being selective and are just sitting around and playing with playstation and Nintendo.

First Year Experience

- The first comment was geared toward the title of the chart. The group felt as though the chart only addressed intellectual development in the sense that other competencies or intelligences were not being taken into consideration. Since we are hoping to develop a holistic approach and /or assist students in becoming well-rounded and we support the idea of a liberal education, they showed concerned that this already seems to set-up a negative image of students affairs and marginalizes or places the experiences of students in co and more so
extra curricular activities as less intellectual and on the fringes of what activities are truly intellectual.

- We need a concierge Office for first year students.
- Counseling emphasized and a balance between classes, work, and activities.

**Missing from the chart that we do:** academic advising in the residence hall first semester, in-hall programming, hall-opening activities built upon during the first few days, outside of FYI.

**Missing and needed:** The group felt as though there needed to be mentoring from upper-class students and/or faculty, as well as alumni. Career development emphasized. Basic information on how to manage college life, nuts and bolts, time management, etc.

**Doing well:** The group felt that the total first year experience was very comprehensive, especially the first two weeks of the semester. They thought that summer orientation was good and provided students with a great deal of information and set a tone for the year, and was followed by FYI and programming in the halls. They also felt that academic advising the residence halls was a large strength.

**Areas of Improvement**

- The partnership between academic and student affairs needs to be improved. They need to work together, supporting and collaborating on activities.
- Each division also needs to collaborate among their own members.
- They felt as though faculty did not think about the development of students outside of the classroom.
- We need more scholarships for students if we want to attract high achieving students.
- Students feel less supported by the University once academic advising ends in the residence halls. This advising should happen throughout the first year.
- We need to address the transition issues of sophomore students as well

**Experiences Required/Encouraged**

- Diversity workshops/programs
- Good citizenship course, including their role as a member of the oxford community and the University.
- Learn about academic success and how to achieve it
- First Year Seminar Course
- A leadershape type weekend for each student – away from campus and obviously targeted toward FY students
- Exposure to campus resources
- More collective first year activities- MU tradition and group activities with class
- Upperclass mentors

**Goals/Objective – FY Seminar**

- Learn how to make decisions and healthy choices
- Career exploration
- Campus resource knowledge
- Diversity awareness
Develop communication skills
Develop and have all students take a series of first semester courses that assist in developing a foundation for being a college student. This would include projects that develop competencies in disciplines as well as resources on campus, such as the library. The course would also allow for self-exploration, develop campus culture, and link them to the University.
Right now, we are asking a lot of students to do all of this and then take a full course load of academic discipline courses.
Many believe that these skills should be developed before coming to college or outside of the classroom, but these skills are not being developed and the students do not have time to develop the skills.
To assist students in transferring their primary authority figure to someone at the University.
They also need to address and answer questions such as: Why am I here? What will I do while I am here? Where do I go next? Will I be happy here? Make friends? What do I value? What is important?
Students are less concerned about the education at MU. They are confident that MU has a solid program that will help them grow, they are more concerned with other things going on around them and in their lives.

Obstacles
The students are very image conscious and stereotypes rule their thinking
Can we really develop a first year experience that balance all of their needs
There are very definitions and messages of “what is success” being sent by various constituents on campus. All of the FYE stakeholders need to define what is important and then convey that to students.
All of the stakeholders and University “buying into” something new
Greek Affairs feels as though they are already being communicated to that extra-curricular activities are not part of the intellectual development and that they are on the fringes of the development
Will the President’s vision of what is best for students contradict what is really best for students (only developing the cognitive part)
Do we believe we have enough time to implement and develop a collaborative plan by 2009.
Letting staff/faculty know when decisions are being made in advance, so that they can be implemented rather than asking for feedback, when the decision has already been made. This allows staff/faculty to make decisions on how to implement or if they need to move to another university.
In-house conferences between faulty and staff that help us get to know each other better and what we do.

FYE – Faculty
Why faculty only teaching FY seminars?
There is value in staff teaching or at least co-teaching courses
The course needs to be 3 credit hours with a grade and serious academic work which is valuable to the student.
English composition should be required of all students
- Will the academic side buy in to a three-hour course? Would the curriculum we discussed be considered?
- TLC courses are good examples of courses that could be offered
- Funding issues. Faculty get paid for courses, where as staff are asked to teach and are not compensated for their time. Some perks are needed.
- Unified curriculum across the FY experience
- There is already a mechanism in place as part of MPF – FY seminar
- The students are very grade conscious, so there needs to be a way of looking at being learning outcome focused
- We need to follow through all four years
- Students are not asked for their opinions, and are used to lecture style. They do not feel as much acceptance of sharing ideas.
- Student and academic affairs need to collaborate at every step along the way and it needs to be reciprocal and equivalent.
- Team teaching between academic and student affairs, and also include business affairs.
- Upper-class students need to be involved in teaching, and maybe include credit

Recommendations
- Meet with additional student groups and ask them what they want? What would have helped them? What do you buy in to?
- Contact Alumni and find out what helped them after graduating, what they could have used?
- Do not out an incomplete product just to meet a deadline.
- Implement in phases
- Patience – it will take time
- Can we create co-op where they receive money and credit while learning

Facilitated and summarized by Jackie Elcik
Housing Services Staff
FYE Stakeholder Interview
March 19, 2002

The Housing Services staff members were glad to be involved at this early stage of the discussions. It is their feeling that much of what gets recommended on this campus does not take into account the fact that they are left with the implementation of the ideas. It should be noted at the outset that the staff were hesitant to make generalizations as they feel they come in contact with so few students, and generally see the upset or angry students.

However, when pushed they believe that the typical student:
- Does not grasp the deeper meaning that we assign to many of our programmatic efforts.
- Is too reliant on their parent, who is quite willing, to solve problems for them.
- Anxious
- Scared
- Feels left out
- Lost
- Feel as though they are outsiders
- These feelings are magnified for the minority student.
- Not very respectful of others.

Two factors were seen as critical to the first year experience, (1) the residence hall. Some place a large emphasis and others place no emphasis on their hall. (2) the parent who wants to maintain control.

Biggest obstacle is the notion of balance. This group feels as though students try to do too much. In some ways they see this as acting out in a concrete fashion their newfound independence. But, the idea that the typical first year student is over involved is a myth. There is a large segment of the population that is not participating in anything other than Nintendo. In general, it was felt that students have not learned how to study or developed efficient study skills.

Goals for the First Year Student:
Return for a 2nd year
Learn problem-solving skills and apply them to life on campus.
Learn time management skills.
Be more open-minded.

Obstacles include the state of the economy. Some students must leave due to economic circumstances of family. Also, the party image of campus makes it hard to recruit students, and also to create a different type of atmosphere once they are here.

Recommendations include a mentor program. At minimum this program should be offered for special populations. Further, at least one participant believes that students need some basic information on how to manage time and study in this environment.
Facilitated and summarized by Hoyt Brown
The Residence Life student staff focus group included six undergraduate, graduate staff, and two FY Advisor. These staff are truly the “front-line” folks when it comes to working with first-year students. They had very detailed knowledge of the experiences of these students. The stories about what first-year students do were fascinating.

**How would you describe the typical first-year student at Miami’s Oxford campus?**
- Family-connected, parentally-protected, expect a lot, excited to get involved, academically sound, easily distracted (motivation drops and goes toward non-academic), interested in anything new, expect attentiveness from faculty/staff, want to be perfect, under pressure to fit in, don’t know what it takes to excel, time management is a problem (lack of structure), tend to become over-involved all at once, lack “big picture” of University, support network moves from academic to social because that’s where they are reinforced.

**Do you think that there exists a balance between curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in most first-year students’ lives?**
- Depends on the student
- Some students do nothing at all, let alone needing to balance
- Being involved improves academic performance because it requires more focus and intentionality
- Video games and instant messenger (IM) are more of a problem than student involvement
- Technology addiction is an issue because it pulls students away from involvement and academics
- The structure for involvement that was present in high school is gone
- Students with higher grades are frequently the ones who have greater socio/economic difficulties
- Social connections and involvement encourage class attendance -> peers count on you to be there

[Share the chart created by Jeannie Brown-Leonard of the various existing first-year experience opportunities.] Have we left anything out of the chart that should be there?
- Getting acquainted with roommate
- First in-hall meeting
- Don’t remember much -> it was all overwhelming

**What do you see as the biggest strengths of Miami’s current first-year experience? What areas do you see as most needing improvement?**
- Strengths:
  - Move-in and campus welcome
  - Handle parents and get them away
  - First-Year reading program
  - Labs in big courses help, to a degree
- Small groups could be helpful but these would need a lot of structure
- Weaknesses:
  - Slow down the new student experience -> this would reduce the stress
  - Space out the FYI issues and tasks
  - Students really need a chance to get to know each other
  - Need unstructured time as well
  - FYI isn’t really academically focused
  - FYI reading should be integrated into other classes:
    - Discussion groups should be more engaging
    - Do in residence halls or outside
    - Need enthusiastic professors/staff
  - First-Year classes need to be smaller
  - Should be focused on greater sense of involvement
  - Scheduling for Spring results in First-Years not getting courses they want
  - Language barriers with some TA’s are a problem
  - “Courses in common” could link students more effectively

What do you think a student should be required or encouraged to do or experience in his/her first year of college?
- Link classes to living environment
- FY Seminar:
  - Require students to engage in campus experiences and then write about it
  - Students should be expected to go outside of their comfort zones
  - Should include study skills and resources
  - Residence Life provides academic support as best they can, but:
    - Students avoid because it is stigmatizing
    - Lack of time
    - Students, in general, only do what they have to do

What do you think that the learning goals or objectives of a first-year student should be? What might be some guiding questions that a student might consider during the first year?
- Be able to dialogue with other people about what you learned
- Social skills -> dealing with someone in authority
- Discuss, debate, and organize what you’ve learned
- Learn to learn deeply rather than “just in time” crash learning
- Gain a broad exposure to campus experiences

What do you see as the most serious obstacles to the implementation of a successful first-year experience? How do you think that they can be overcome?
- Hard core courses don’t really teach learning skills
- Not a lot of independent thinking by students
- Student fear of failure results in low risk-taking
- Trouble enrolling in courses outside of the major impedes exploration
- Poor time management
- Social skills to initiate faculty relationships
Professors are perceived to not support learning of students, particularly in Chemistry, Science, Calculus, and DSE

- Students need to fit in -> may result in students sometimes aligning with negative peers
- Barriers to discovery of one’s major – students are expected to choose too early and its tough to change once you commit

Some other universities concerned with improving the first-year experience have instigated a number of different initiatives, including first-year seminars. What is your opinion of Miami offering a first-year seminar taught by faculty from a variety of departments? What should the nature of the collaboration between student and academic affairs be?

- If Miami goes optional, those students who don’t need it will be the most likely to take the seminar

What advice or recommendations do you have for us?

- Keep the dialogue going
- Talk to First-Year students to gain their input
- Teach students to take responsibility for themselves – transition out of First-Year to Sophomore year is very abrupt
- Eventually, Miami will need a Sophomore-year experience focus

Facilitated and summarized by Denny Roberts
The Residence Life Central staff, composed of approximately ten people, provided the following input regarding FYE. This staff is well informed about the issues which first-year students face and they had considerable input to offer.

How would you describe the typical first-year student at Miami’s Oxford campus?
- Busy and involved
- Pushing their own boundaries – were “big fish” and now learning new ways of relating in a bigger pond
- Interested in leadership
- Reluctant to ask for help
- Low risk-takers because they’ve been so successful before
- Want to stay comfortable and “in charge”
- “Typical” is a problem -> There is no “typical” -> almost all students feel like the “other”
- Pseudo-confident
- Really nice people
- See Miami as a comfortable place – like home
- High achieving and ambitious – want to be the best

Do you think that there exists a balance between curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in most first-year students’ lives?
- Students don’t have high expectations of the time they will need to spend on academics.
- Students “bow out” of out of class responsibilities when they get stressed in class.
- Students don’t feel challenged by their academics (with the exception of Calculus, BMZ, and Chemistry)
- Students don’t know what balance is -> feeling overwhelmed is what they like.
- They sense the competition and seeking recognition results in students feeling that they have to push the edge of over-involvement.
- The over-involved 10% gives the impression that all students are this way, which is not the case.
- Students get involved because they feel compelled to fill their resumes or because they want to fit in.

[Share the chart created by Jeannie Brown-Leonard of the various existing first-year experience opportunities.] Have we left anything out of the chart that should be there?
- Spring of HS Senior year - Selection of a Theme Learning Community that fits student interests
- First days of class:
  - Meeting with FYA
  - Residence Life provides a “safe haven” that establishes a base from which students can experiment and learn.
- Mid-term evaluations
- Annual Student Leadership Conference
- 2nd semester
  - Learning Assistance Center
  - 1st year Honor Society invitations

What do you see as the biggest strengths of Miami’s current first-year experience? What areas do you see as most needing improvement?

Strengths:
- The low RA to student ratio provides easy access to help.
- The advising connection in Residence Life is a strength.
- Orientation and FYI front-loads students’ experiences with positive involvement.

Weaknesses:
- Transition to the 2nd year is weak -> students are used to a lot of attention and then they are lost as sophomores.
- Lack of interaction and communication among those offices and divisions involved with first-year students.
- Miami needs to be more intentional in our programs for new students -> all faculty and staff need to support these initiatives.
- Faculty are told by their colleagues not to get involved in co-curricular events. This makes positive involvement difficult.
- We are too prescriptive in our ideas about “appropriate behavior” as policy matters rather than more relational in building a sense of shared responsibility among students.
- Technology may be reducing students’ interpersonal competence.
- Miami needs more challenging and engaging classes.
- First-year students need better advising in the 2nd semester when they are transferred to divisional advising. They still want to get help from the FYA.

What do you think a student should be required or encouraged to do or experience in his/her first year of college?
- Communicate assertively and resolve own conflicts
- Take a course because it’s interesting, rather than because they have to
- Students should have greater flexibility to explore their interests and academic majors
- The grade barriers in Business and Education are problematic because they inhibit exploration
- Students should have to see an advisor in order to register
- All students should have a multicultural experience

What do you think that the learning goals or objectives of a first-year student should be? What might be some guiding questions that a student might consider during the first year?
- Are you doing what you want to do?
- Explore self and values -> How do they relate to life-long learning?
- What am I learning from my experiences in and out-of-class?
- Where am I spending my time?
- Should be exposed to the performing arts.
- Students should find their voice in their learning experience.
What do you see as the most serious obstacles to the implementation of a successful first-year experience? How do you think that they can be overcome?

- Students lose balance as they stretch to try new things.
- Students carry “baggage” -> counseling and family
- High expectations cause students to demand high grades whether or not they deserve it.
- The communities of origin of Miami students hold them back.
- Faculty perceive that they are not recognized or rewarded for innovative practices.
- There is poor coordination between academic departments and the advising groups.
- There are inconsistent messages from administration -> the connection of academic and co-curricular learning should be honored
- Senior faculty should be more engaged with students
- Change is difficult at Miami and it is too cumbersome to gain approval for innovation
- Academic divisional requirements are inconsistent:
  - Force add policies
  - Petition processes
  - Faculty don’t adhere to institutional initiatives

Some other universities concerned with improving the first-year experience have instigated a number of different initiatives, including first-year seminars. What is your opinion of Miami offering a first-year seminar taught by faculty from a variety of departments?

What should the nature of the collaboration between student and academic affairs be?

- Improved interaction and exposure of faculty as a result of Theme Learning Communities
- Miami needs to be more academically rigorous at the same time it supports a coherent first-year student adjustment strategy
- Students Affairs is reaching out but needs a response
- “Required” seminar will undermine the positive nature of any FYE
- Keep seminars small and intimate
- Seminars should include:
  - Attendance at campus events
  - Faculty/staff co-instructors
  - Introduction to campus culture
  - Exploration of the “balance” of learning
  - Should spin out of summer reading
- Faculty need training in seminar facilitation:
  - Student Affairs can help with this
  - Instructors really need to “buy in” to the concept
  - 3-day seminar with instructors to help in skill development and building a team among them

What advice or recommendations do you have for us?

- Don’t do FYE in isolation from the rest of the curriculum and other experiences
- Look at sophomore year to analyze the reasons for attrition at that time
- Need more “Miami Plan” options
- Hold to our principles rather than deferring to “business” issues of the University

Facilitated by David Doyle and summarized by Denny Roberts
The counseling staff offered very thoughtful and concerned testimony of some of the struggles and triumphs experienced by first-year students during our hour and fifteen minute conversation. Themes we touched on include a pervasive “Miami Image,” involvement inside and outside the classroom, diversity, and the idea of a first-year seminar.

The Typical Miami Student

- There is a pervasive and remarkably consistent “Miami Image. The image consists of a blond, thin, attractive, and affluent perfectionist. A part of this image includes the expectation that a student’s roommate will be his/her best friend and that the corridor will become his/her primary peer group.
- Conformity is embraced as good.
- This image is projected by current students and alumni, as well as by more subtle indicators such as the campus tour.
- Miami attracts students seeking a homogenous environment; one in which they see themselves reflected regularly.

Responses: 1) Campus tour can help counter the obvious image issues. De-emphasize the Freshman 15 and J. Crew U. in favor of other messages that further our goals. 2) University events such as Convocation are undermined by the antics of other students as the first-year class walks to Millett. Fraternities with signs “I love fresh meat” and numerical ratings of the women walking past play into body image issues. Although not supported or encouraged by the University, there does not appear to be any effort to stop this behavior either. 3) Confront Miami Image issues at summer orientation. List the characteristics associated with the image and ask students to point out how they are different from this image. This exercise could lead to exercises designed to explore differences.

Miami Students Served by the Counseling Center

- Students who do not see themselves in the Miami Image; they are unable to find their niche. Not fitting in can lead to depression and/or dropping out. Even students who really do fit the Miami Image do not perceive themselves as possessing the salient characteristics of the Miami Image.
- Students who are seeking or who represent diversity.

Involvement Inside and Outside the Classroom

- Range of involvement from very involved outside of class (some over involved) to no involvement.
- Under-involved students fall into two categories: 1) those not connected and spend all their time in their room; may go out only to drink, often to excess, and 2) those who have no time to get involved outside of class because they are carrying overly ambitious
academic loads needed, they perceive, to achieve their academic and career goals. Students in both these groups struggle.

- Dichotomy of perfectionism and failure. We need to teach students how to fail, how to incorporate failure and doubt into their view of themselves so that they can work through failures and grow from them.
- Miami is fixated on helping students achieve at the expense of student growth and learning.
- Many students report not being challenged in their first-year courses.
- Students are not happy with the MP courses they don’t want to take.

Responses: 1) A freshman forgiveness policy for failures in the classroom would send a better message about failure and how one can recover from it. 2) Need to attend to subtle, pervasive messages. Examples: why call students undecided or undeclared? Why not call them “exploring”? 3) Help students find niche and meaningful involvement. Theme learning communities may be helping here.

Diversity

- There is little room for diversity at Miami because the Miami Image prompts students to conform.
- Diversity expectations do not match reality. “I Am Miami” campaign and recruitment efforts showcase a Miami that most students of color don’t experience when they matriculate.
- Critical tension exists between desire for a safe, comfortable environment in which a student feels at home and an interest in learning about others and their differences. Fear and apprehension about appearing stupid inhibit some students from taking advantage of opportunities to experience differences.
- We need to cultivate a climate that says it is okay to make a mistake; in fact making mistakes can be a great way to learn. (Related to issue of failure above.)

Responses: 1) Theme learning communities appear to be a great place for students to learn about diversity and gain practice in experiencing conflict and creating a resolution to problems related to diversity issues. 2) Students, at the end of their first year, should have a chance to experience themselves as a cultural person. Can tap international perspectives here, too. 3) Challenge residence life policy allowing complete corridors to move together. Promotes insularity. 4) MU website: invites inquiries from high school students rather than prospective students. This language excludes non-traditional students.

First-Year Seminar

- Great idea.
- Need a developmental approach. If MU is committed to serving a traditional age college student, then we have the opportunity to apply developmental strategy in this seminar. Identity issues would be ideal.
- Experiential piece would help make seminar more meaningful and personally relevant.
- Academic content appropriate. Consider exploring themes of identity and intimacy.
- Students need to figure out who they are and how that relates to their major, and career goals.
- Need to build on seminar with a series of integrated experiences across the first year and beyond. Need to affect the climate so there are multiple safe spaces to take risks.
- Consider model at Grinnell College. Students take a small seminar on a topic of interest, yet all courses explore, in some way, identity and purpose. Research, writing and issues of self and being are included. Course is not graded.

**Responses:**
1) MU does a great job of promoting first-year student unity (which affects transfer students in a negative way). How do we do this? Suspect it is via the residence halls. If we could accomplish this through a demanding course that cuts across residence hall assignments, the benefits could be great.
2) Could explore issues of multicultural identity, perhaps by bringing in a panel of students who represent differences similar to the approach taken with the Community Advocacy Alliance training.
3) Consider making service a part of the first-year experience.
4) Need to provide opportunities for students to get out of town for a structured, enriching experience.

Facilitated and summarized by Jeannie Brown Leonard
The hour and a half conversation with staff of the Bernard B. Rinella Jr. Learning Assistance Center was engaging and productive. Although our conversation covered many topics, a central theme was one of advocacy for a large number of students served by this office who do not fit the “typical mold” of a Miami University student.

Typical Miami Student

- Eager to fit in and make friends.
- Affluent family background. Offered many opportunities in their lives. Privileged.
- Socially sophisticated, polite, and well behaved. Know how to work “the system.”
- Label conscious and materialistic.
- Uses a planner.
- Students think they already know everything; they have nothing more to learn. Just here for a credential.
- Task and achievement oriented.
- Have difficulty asking for help or being perceived as not being all “together.”

Observations: 1) Miami attracts many students who can function well in this achievement-oriented, well-mannered, homogenous environment. 2) Employers respond positively to the social sophistication of our students.

Most Miami Students Served by Learning Assistance

- Lack confidence; expect the challenge of Miami to be too great.
- Less sophisticated socially. Need help to work “the system.”
- Unwilling to let anyone know that they don’t know something: “Fake it ‘til you make it.”
- Risk averse: not willing to reveal what they know or don’t know, for example, in study groups.
- Anxious if they do not earn enough hours to be a sophomore after their first year.
- Fall through the cracks in a system that is geared to some hypothetical “typical” audience.
- Need help trusting the system.

Involvement Inside and Outside the Classroom

- Few meaningful connections between the two.
- Motivated by resume building.

Observations/Response: 1) Campus could be more welcoming. Consider more institution-wide gatherings on the same scale of convocation. Reintroduce Charter Day (in Feb.) when classes are canceled and the community comes together. Need to teach first-year students the alma mater. 2) We need a student union where students and faculty can gather. Shriver Center is more like a place we rent out for big events.
Academic Engagement

- Some students with creative ideas and an interest in learning and risk-taking are socialized early to conform and to “get the job done” via first-year classes.
- Learning means memorizing; a persistence of a high school mentality about learning – there is a right answer and as students their job is to consume as much knowledge as they can.
- The purposefulness in taking Miami Plan courses is undermined by some divisions and departments that require specific Miami Plan courses. Students don’t understand the Miami Plan for Liberal Education or why they have to take Foundation courses. The Bulletin is written at such a sophisticated and obtuse reading level, students in general don’t have much chance of comprehending it.
- No opportunities to fail; students are expected to do well and not make mistakes. Experience of failure is too punishing and hard to recover from.
- Some academic programs with rigid requirements discourage risks; missing one step puts you off track.
- Not all MPF courses are the same (in terms of rigor) nor do all students experience these courses the same way.

Observations: 1) We need our best faculty teaching first-year students. 2) Miami sends messages (subtle and not so subtle) about our values. For example, the campus ecology of our academic spaces does not invite students to linger, to engage in conversations outside of class with faculty. Our uniform architecture supports conformity. Offices related by function are not physically connected. 3) Faculty culture is affected by conflicting ideas over Miami’s identity: are we like Yale, or are we a state school with a commitment to undergraduate learning?

First-Year Seminar

- Like the idea of a first-year seminar, perhaps like the University and the Student that used to be more readily available. This might be a one-hour course dedicated to helping students make a smooth transition to the University.
- A three-hour content-based class also has merit. Strong support for making sure these content seminars are NOT linked to an academic major. Students need time to explore and should not feel locked in to an academic program in their first year. Academic areas should not stake out their turf in these courses; students do and can change majors.
- Seminar should include experiential component and be developmentally appropriate.
- We need our best faculty teaching first-year students.

Observations: 1) Theme learning communities are a strong contribution. 2) Miami is not broken, but there is room for improvement.
Facilitated and Summarized by Jeannie Brown Leonard
Student Leadership Staff
Purposeful Choices -> -> Reflective Connections
SL,CCL Initiatives to Support First in 2009
Emerging Ideas Summary

I. What are we trying to fix?
   a. Help students become critical thinkers in the choices they make both in and outside of class.
   b. Students will understand the options and accept the responsibility of their choices:
      i. Time
      ii. Expense
      iii. Energy committed
      iv. Balance with other commitments
      v. Other
   c. Understand the dynamics of peer pressure (social response)
   d. Balance of “on” and “off” time
   e. Connection of mind and body
   f. Understand tension between learning to earn versus learning to live
   g. Where is risk taking in students’ experiences?
   h. How can we draw students to purposeful action on things that are important to them and others?

II. Possible strategies:
   a. Staff and faculty need to look carefully at what we’re role modeling
   b. Need strategies to spread opportunities for student involvement more broadly:
      i. Learn to appreciate the contribution made by everyone, including but going beyond positional leaders
      ii. Positional leaders and highly involved may need to get out of the way to make room for others
   c. Help students question their types and degree of involvement:
      i. Programs that focus on balance, roles, and involvement commitment
      ii. What makes students’ experiences healthy and enjoyable?
   d. What are the rewards that encourage or discourage appropriate depth and spread of involvement?
      i. Parents awards
      ii. Other awards processes
      iii. Opportunity itself
   e. Others:

III. Purpose Choices ->->> Reflective Connections Orientation/FYI initiative:
   a. Working with students to combine to create a coherent and purposeful initiative:
      i. Starting in Orientation with support and preparation from student leaders
      ii. RA training to prepare them for their role
      iii. FYI
      iv. Mega Fair
v. RA’s provide reflective program to help students make purposeful decisions

b. Possible questions to stimulate student thinking:
   i. How will you make the transition from high school involvement to college involvement?
   ii. Why get involved (benefits)?
   iii. How to get involved?
   iv. How to find the right level of involvement?
   v. What type of involvement do you want to pursue - improving an existing interest or broadening yourself by trying new things?
   vi. How to use what you've learned through your involvement in your future vocation?

c. The Mega Fair could potentially include:
   i. Student Activities Fair
   ii. Volunteer Fair
   iii. Unity Fest
   iv. Greek Expo
   v. Might include a booklet/map of the decision process and the options available
   vi. Others?

d. Focus of this initiative is to encourage students to become aware of and explore the many options for positive student involvement:
   i. However, involvement needs to be purposeful and should be related to what’s best for the individual student, rather than the organizations seeking to recruit them.
   ii. Purposeful choices could be made within a framework of:
      1. What knowledge, skills, and experience does the student desire to have?
      2. What areas of development does the student want to explore further – areas of current strength or new areas to be developed?
      3. What’s the trailmap for progression throughout a Miami education? What do you want to be like by the end?
   iii. Some student organizations will have to be enticed into giving up their competitive edge in recruiting by recognizing that when they go for the masses, they frequently recruit low-commitment individuals who will not help or will be high-risk for attrition.

e. “Red Book,” “M” Book, and ASG Student Organization involvement database:
   i. The First in 2009 Student Ambassadors are looking at how these three initiatives could be combined or coordinated to send involvement messages.
   ii. This is an opportunity to get the “Purpose Choices ->->> Reflective Connections” message across in a consistent and meaningful way.
   iii. As each of us work with the groups involved, nudge them toward this concept.

f. Recreational Sports is prepared to offer:
   i. Balanced recreation and conditioning for all students.
ii. Employment opportunities for those who desire to work.

iii. Training for student organizations and their leadership to demonstrate how to optimize organization effectiveness by learning to sharpen focus and involve all members.

g. Theme Learning Community courses could be one delivery mechanism to bring these issues into first-year students’ awareness – particularly the “Leadership, Excellence, and Community” EDL306 course.

h. Upper-class students could be encouraged to use +1 option added to existing coursework as a way of using academic experiences to explore the experiential learning gained from student organization participation and leadership.

Facilitated by Denny Roberts
APPENDIX F: Vision for the First-Year Seminar
Vision for the First-Year Seminar

General Vision Overview
Because Miami University has a large student population with varying needs, abilities, and backgrounds, we propose that Miami offer a variegated model for first-year seminars. All of the seminars offered under this model will use differing formats and approaches to achieve the same general goals: to set high intellectual expectations for students, to motivate students to engage actively in the intellectual life of the university, and to instill lifelong habits of learning and the principles of a liberal education.

Each semester, seminars using differing pedagogical formats and approaches as well as featuring a variety of different topics will be offered. (In fact, we recommend that three models be piloted in the first year and assessed.) Due to budgetary constraints as well as constraints in students’ schedules, we propose that these seminars be optional. Yet, because they will provide students with an exciting way to begin their college education, the seminars should be highly recommended and promoted. Below are our specific recommendations for the various seminar components.

Targeted Students
These seminars should be open to any first-year student wishing to enroll. Special attention should be paid to offering seminars with topics that are of general appeal to first-year students. However, because the entering student population is varied, it is important to offer seminars that are designed to appeal to groups of students with special backgrounds, interests or needs (e.g., transfer students, athletes, undeclared majors, minorities, students with disabilities, S.E.P. students).

Class size
We recommend that first-year seminars be capped at twenty students.

Credit hours and other credits
We recommend that these courses be three-credit hour and meet one Miami Plan Foundation requirement.

Course Goals and Objectives
The primary goals of the first-year seminar are as follows:
• To set positive and high expectations about learning and passion for intellectual engagement;
• To gain the foundational skills and habits of a liberal education;
• To foster the idea that learning happens through active engagement with course materials (e.g., writing, library research, discussion, fieldwork, scientific method) and through collaborating with other learners (e.g., faculty, students, librarians, Student Affairs staff);
• To promote respect among learners and cultivate students’ understanding of diversity;
• To improve communication skills (writing, speaking, information technology);
• To promote meaningful interaction between faculty and students;
• To involve students in the total life of the university.
Although these seminars will undoubtedly help students assimilate and adjust to university life, they will not represent the traditional college survival skills course. Study skills, time management, and other coping strategies will not be foregrounded within the classroom. Instead, co-curricular programming will be offered to help reinforce these skills. Where skill-development is deemed essential to success for special student populations, college survival skills will be included as part of the regular course content.

Content Areas
The content of the first-year seminar will vary from instructor to instructor. Possible content areas include:

- Academic topic addressing professor’s area of research
- Interdisciplinary problem or issue (e.g., global warming, mythology, food, rock music, road trips in movies and literature, race)
- Diversity issues – socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, sexual, religious, and racial
- Service learning and civic engagement
- Citizenship and the democratic process
- Value and nature of higher education
- Conflict management
- Health and wellness
- Leadership for a changing world
- Arts as reflection and shaper of contemporary culture
- Popular culture

All courses will focus on communication and library skills (speaking, writing, information technology). In addition, instructors will make efforts to offer topics that will be particularly appealing to entering students or entering groups of students. Special attention will need to be given to the title, course description and marketing of the courses. For example, a title such as “Planet of the Apes” is more appealing than “Primatology.”

Pedagogical Approach/Format
In order to meet the learning goals of the course, it is crucial that the class size is small (no more than 20 students) and that there is an emphasis on active learning methods and assignments that ask students to engage in analysis, problem-solving, interpretation and synthesis. Lecturing and objective, multiple-choice type testing should be kept to a minimum. Active learning approaches include:

- Cooperative learning
- Role-playing
- Simulations
- Service-learning experiences
- Fieldwork
- Labs
- Inquiry-based learning
- Democratic learning (where students along with the instructor design the course themselves)
- Team-teaching, interdisciplinary learning
- Technology-based learning
- Courses in common learning community (with proseminar taught by both instructors).
In addition to taking an active learning approach, it is also important that instructors meet individually and in groups with students outside of class through individual conference, co-curricular programming, field experiences, cultural/intellectual events on campus, or social engagements.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation**
Because of its academic content, first-year-seminar students should receive a letter grade. However, it is recommended that faculty incorporate non-graded assignments in order to encourage students to try out new ideas and to take risks. Writing and research-based assignments and other assignments that encourage higher order, critical thinking skills are emphasized. Assignments should demand that students spend at least two hours outside of class each week for each credit hour assigned to the course and that students attend class regularly.

**Instructors**
In general, first-year seminars will be taught by full-time faculty members. Student Affairs staff may also instruct select Theme Learning Community courses. Some instructors may choose to co-facilitate their seminars with another faculty member from a different discipline or a member of the student affairs staff. Others may also seek the assistance of peer mentors or supplemental instructors.

**Administrative Structure**
In order to have a coherent, well-organized first-year seminar experience, it is imperative that one person or administrative unit oversees the entire program and that a sufficient budget is allocated to the program. We propose that there be a First-Year Experience office on campus in which both academic and student affairs personnel are employed. The University Honors Program and the Theme Learning Community initiative within Residence Life have already begun significant first-year student enhancements; a direct link to these initiatives should be incorporated into the program oversight strategy so that they are enhanced as attention to Miami’s First-Year Experience increases.

The First-Year Experience office should feature an advisory board that creates guidelines for first-year seminars, develops assessment methods, and offers support to faculty teaching the course. Special care should be taken to ensure that course proposal reviews and assessment are consultative in nature, rather than punitive and burdensome. The FYE office should also work with other centers (CELT, CWE, CAWC) on campus to offer faculty development seminars or workshops in order to support faculty in teaching first-year seminars.

**Faculty Development**
Because many faculty members are not accustomed to teaching first-year students in a seminar setting, we recommend that whenever possible, faculty receive development training in working with entering students. First-year faculty can be brought together as a whole. Or more ideally, they can be divided into groups of topical interest (e.g., those teaching service-learning courses, those team-teaching, those addressing cultural diversity topics). Attention should be paid in these workshops to the developmental, cognitive, and affective needs of the first-year student, to available resources and opportunities on campus, and to teaching approaches that advance rigorous inquiry.
Assessment of First-Year Seminars and Instructors
Just as students need to take risks and try out new ideas and approaches, faculty should be encouraged to do the same. As a result, we propose that first-year seminar instructors be assessed using nontraditional means. Rather than administer a simple, numerical student evaluation form (which may discourage risk-taking and high learning expectations), first-year seminars and instructors will be assessed in other ways—e.g., portfolio, peer review, small group instructional diagnosis, focus groups, self-evaluations. The essential message that instructors in First-Year Seminars must hear is that experimentation is valued and that risk-taking, self-criticism, and requiring more of students will be supported.
APPENDIX G: First-Year Co-Curricular Experiences—Critical Issues, Strengths, Areas Needing Improvement
First in 2009 Initiatives  
First-Year Experience Committee  
Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Experiences  
Miami University  
Oxford, OH

The First-Year Experience Committee reviewed relevant literature and studied numerous models for the first-year experience during its 2002 deliberations. As a result of this conceptual work, the committee chose to create a model for a first-year seminar and complementary co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences to enhance the first-year experience. The following information is the result of stakeholder focus group interviews with ten clusters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admission</th>
<th>Counseling Services</th>
<th>English Composition</th>
<th>Greek Affairs</th>
<th>Honors Student Advisory Board</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King Library Staff</td>
<td>Learning Assistance Center</td>
<td>Liberal Education Council</td>
<td>Residence Life – Building Staff</td>
<td>Residence Life – Central Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information goes beyond what can reasonably be piloted or implemented in the short-term. However, the FYE Committee encourages consideration of the “Recommendations” listed below in the continued collaborative work of Academic and Student Affairs as the first-year experience of Miami students is enhanced.

**Recruitment and Admissions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promotional Literature (brochures, viewbook, website, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Lack of clarity in our image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ “I Am Miami” portrays a more inclusive community than we presently have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ How can intellectual vitality be coupled with balanced out-of-class life expectations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Tours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Issues</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Tour should reflect and shape culture of campus and unique or differentiating aspects of Miami University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Tour should include people issues more than</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
just buildings. | credible representatives of the University. | life of learning at Miami.

- Work with Honors to include anecdotes that highlight students’ intellectual accomplishments.

**Red Carpet Days, Open Houses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Critical Issues</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Recommendations</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ More emphasis on academics and intellectual life</td>
<td>▪ Student panel is very persuasive.</td>
<td>▪ Include a more prominent presentation by the library.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Students are most powerful voice in shaping prospective students’ views.</td>
<td>▪ Special interest sessions provided to address student questions and concerns</td>
<td>▪ Accentuate messages about purposeful choices and involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Visitation messages need to be better designed and coordinated.</td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Current students must see focus on learning as in their benefit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Assess student perceptions of culture = portray it accurately.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Other:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Critical Issues</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Recommendations</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Need to recruit more high-ability students.</td>
<td>▪ Increasing numbers of students identified as “gifted.”</td>
<td>▪ Summer programs for gifted students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ More talented students need to see themselves as sharing in responsibility to enhance campus vitality.</td>
<td>▪ A recently revamped and impressive Honors Program is now in place.</td>
<td>▪ Use alumni to conduct interviews and advocate for Miami University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ “Gifted” aren’t that much different than many other students.</td>
<td>▪ Miami students are more uniformly talented than students at other campuses.</td>
<td>▪ More community-building for Harrison Scholars and Oxford Scholars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Enrollment increases stress programs, faculty, and staff.</td>
<td>▪ Miami is presented as a unified learning community with plentiful resources.</td>
<td>▪ Continue with the implementation of the revised Honors Program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ More faculty and departmental involvement.</td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Clearly communicate which academic programs have restricted enrollment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Orientation/Pre-Semester Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Critical Issues</strong></th>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Recommendations</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Parents and parental interests seem to take</td>
<td>▪ Well-organized</td>
<td>▪ More programming that is only for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Good student involvement in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Too much abstract lecturing about Miami Plan
- Need to expand breadth of Miami image beyond “J. Crew U.”
- How should we focus on collegiate problems such as alcohol abuse, date rape, etc.?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FYI</th>
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</table>

### Critical Issues
- Need to promote multicultural and intellectual concerns.
- Students need to learn to value breadth of their classmates rather than security of familiar.

### Strengths
- Late night programming sets positive expectation for AFTER DARK programs that will follow.
- Students “bond” with one another in common experience.

### Recommendations
- Offer some more free time for students to wander around campus.
- Provide opportunities to meet faculty.
- Accentuate the importance of inclusion.
- AFTER DARK is needed and should increasingly be the responsibility of students.
- Include the library as a learning resource – demonstrate its use.
- Include programming on cultural differences led by students.
- Incorporate service-learning or other off-campus experience.
- Initiate school-based applications of the reading theme.

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### Summer Reading Program/Convocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not all students read the book.</td>
<td>Common experience for all entering students</td>
<td>Select book and theme three years in advance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough faculty incorporate the book</td>
<td>FYI Reading program has a long and respected history.</td>
<td>Coordinate cocurricular and curricular</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Critical Issues

- Transition to sophomore year needs attention.
- Need for more common experiences for all students.

### Strengths

- Miami has a good retention rate from the first- to the sophomore year.

### Recommendations

- Reinstitution Charter Day in February.

### Critical Issues

- Students not receiving enough advising that moves beyond course scheduling; need help with making purposeful choices, achieving balance, finding a niche.
- Some students spending too much time on computer, not

### Strengths

- First-year advisors are readily available to students.
- First-year advisors do receive training in the summer prior to the beginning of the school year.
- Because of their presence in the residence halls, the first-year advisors approach students through their

### Recommendations

- Reinforce the importance of students deciding to get involved in select and purposeful ways.
- Rewrite the Miami Bulletin so that it is more student-friendly; eliminate obtuse language.
- Advocate for “exploratory” learning.
integrating into campus life.
- Students are afraid to “fail” and, thus, avoid challenge.

- breadth of experiences.
- rather than “undecided.”
- Look at learning as a process of discovering what students care about.

### Residence Life

#### Theme Learning Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff are asked to teach TLC courses but are not compensated enough.</td>
<td>Growing emphasis of TLCs on other campuses; Miami will need to refine in ways that distinguish these programs.</td>
<td>Find way to include and reward faculty for being involved in TLC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing but still not enough faculty involvement</td>
<td>Provides students a way of finding a community.</td>
<td>Encourage cross-theme interaction and programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TLCs should be encouraged as focal points instead of defining silos.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore how TLC courses can be used as interim or long-term FYE Seminars.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Community Life Programming/Roommate Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage student culture that is more intellectually and academically oriented.</td>
<td>Students positively anticipate the opportunity to get acquainted and build relationships.</td>
<td>Support the creation of a larger Peer Mentor program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need more faculty involvement in Residence Life programs.</td>
<td>Many Miami students are high in communication skills.</td>
<td>Investigate a more detailed questionnaire for matching roommates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor roommate selection can disrupt a student’s first year.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Foster student commitment to the quality of their living and learning experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students not willing to confront difference, challenge themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eliminate residence life policy that enables complete corridors to move together in sophomore year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Physical Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of classroom space</td>
<td>Campus is traditional and attractive in appearance.</td>
<td>Need to renovate residence halls to fit evolving student needs and preferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of study space</td>
<td>Small buildings that encourage sense of belonging among students and groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of space for faculty and students to co-mingle casually</td>
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</table>

#### Other:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
- Limited number of course options for students
- A huge array of options for Miami Plan Foundation courses are on the books.
- Miami Plan principles promote sound pedagogy when they are taken seriously.
- Consider reserving more spots for first-year students in highly demanded courses.
- Work with departments who offer “lock-step” majors to find ways to free up more electives in students’ schedules.
- Encourage Liberal Education Council to work with CELT to create faculty development opportunities for implementing the MP principles in creative ways.

### Student Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Miami has a long and successful record of cultivating service and leadership among its students.</td>
<td>“Miami’s Leadership Commitment” has been recognized as a model for other campuses.</td>
<td>Academic schools should create explicit and ongoing ties to “Miami’s Leadership Commitment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students attracted to Miami tend to be more interested in involvement and leadership than at many other campuses.</td>
<td>Developing leadership is advocated as a shared responsibility among faculty and Student Affairs staff.</td>
<td>Academic schools should designate representatives to the Academic Advisory Board advocating for the inter-disciplinary teaching of leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student leadership can become advocates for institutional enhancement when involved in the process.</td>
<td>Leadership development is conceptualized as both a learning and cultural issue.</td>
<td>Academic and Student Affairs messages about service and leadership should be complementary and purposeful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment of program implementation is ongoing and purposeful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Greek Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-year walk to Convocation promotes poor image of Miami.</td>
<td>The majority of Greek students take pride in their heritage and contribution to campus.</td>
<td>Appeal to the exemplary elements of the Greek community to deal with those that are not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to harness the peer power inherent in Greek membership – members will do almost anything for each other.</td>
<td>History of Greek organizations is that of change agents – use this on contemporary issues.</td>
<td>Send clear messages about what is expected in terms of Greek organization behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greek grade point averages are consistently above all-men’s and all-women’s.</td>
<td>Faculty advisors in all groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty support administration rather than lodge criticism and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Issues</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not enough service learning incorporated into co-curricular or curricular programming</td>
<td>Miami has wonderful examples of isolated success in service learning.</td>
<td>Encourage, where possible, the adoption of service learning principles in student service activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service learning is one of the fastest growing modern pedagogies in U.S. higher education.</td>
<td>Students are interested and committed to philanthropy and community service.</td>
<td>Increase transportation resources to service sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish Faculty Associate program in the Office of Service Learning and Civic Leadership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Promote and utilize new “Civic Leadership and Social Responsibility Incubator.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Associated Student Government**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students feel at times that their points of view are not respected.</td>
<td>Tradition of positive student engagement</td>
<td>Encourage ASG to take more prominent role in shaping overall student culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASG must be allowed to chart its own course, make mistakes, and learn from the consequences.</td>
<td>Student governance viewed as a learning opportunity.</td>
<td>Use ASG as source for student input on emerging plans to enhance FYE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students are willing to risk more because there is no threat of grade repercussions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Minority Leadership Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some students increasingly unresponsive to “diversity” messages.</td>
<td>Growing critical mass of students from diverse backgrounds</td>
<td>Focus on academic success of students from diverse backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21st century will be diverse whether or not it is inclusive</td>
<td>New Center for American and World Culture will be available in 2003</td>
<td>Advocate for true infusion of diverse points of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are organized to stay in our own silos or tribes.</td>
<td>Director of Center for American and World Culture joining Miami staff in 2002</td>
<td>Center for American and World Culture should become catalyst for inclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Other Organizations (Scholar-Leaders, HSAB, Service Organizations)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Issues</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Growing numbers of students are coming to Miami who perceive themselves as intellectually gifted.</td>
<td>• Honors Program is taking active steps to build a strong student community.</td>
<td>• Encourage students who are labeled as “gifted” to take responsibility for transforming the learning community for all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We need to recognize that high expectations come with “giftedness.”</td>
<td>• Raising student self-confidence and expectations raises the bar for everyone.</td>
<td>• Target Scholar Leader awards in specific academic areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student support service needs for honors students has risen with increased numbers.</td>
<td>• One’s own learning is enhanced by helping others with theirs.</td>
<td>• Encourage student scholars to be accountable to faculty who provide them opportunity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Theme Learning Communities are helping to provide an oasis for students who find the broader Miami culture hostile.</td>
<td>• Encourage Western College to reach beyond its boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Western College (IDS) is a strong community focused on engaged learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Choices Matter Initiative**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Miami students are not uniform in their level of involvement, although the public perception is that they are all over-involved.</td>
<td>• Active engagement outside of class is a long-standing cultural strength of the campus.</td>
<td>• Consistent messages about purposeful involvement choices should be given throughout new students’ experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Those students who are over-involved deny others opportunity.</td>
<td>• Residential campus and isolation force students to attend only to their education.</td>
<td>• Change the piecemeal activities, volunteer, and other fairs to one that is coordinated and coherent in message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do students who are over-involved resist greater intellectual rigor or are they responding due to a lack of rigor?</td>
<td>• The IDS “Statement of educational objectives” is a great model to encourage greater student purposefulness.</td>
<td>• Reinforce that some form of involvement that represents taking risk is important for all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Create better communications systems for students to be able to know how</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to become appropriately involved in a variety of things.

- Modify existing and new written communications to reinforce the purposeful choices theme (i.e. Miami Memos, the “M” Book, and “Red Pages.”)

### Student Support Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are conflicted about their perceptions of failure – welcome risk in some settings but not others.</td>
<td>New Counseling Services facility provides a positive and visible place to seek help.</td>
<td>Provide development for staff and faculty on helping students learn to make mistakes, to take risks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformity and perfectionism undermine some forms of risk-taking.</td>
<td>Counseling Center has been steadily increasing its service to students over the years.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Health Services

<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rising numbers of students on psychotropic medications</td>
<td>Coalition for a Healthy community among University and Oxford</td>
<td>Continue AFTER DARK.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-medication through abuse of prescription drugs, elicit drugs, and alcohol</td>
<td>Local Oxford youth involved in movement toward environmental health and wellness</td>
<td>Get Greek system more invested in the broader campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AFTER DARK initiative is gaining momentum.</td>
<td>Confront enabling behavior of alumni.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Student Financial Services

<table>
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<th>Critical Issues</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for more high-ability students.</td>
<td>Students have attended Miami in the past out of the assumption that the quality of their education was superior, regardless of the higher cost.</td>
<td>More scholarships for high-ability students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami is increasingly finding itself competing with institutions that we don’t want to recognize.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Admission and Financial Aid offers packaged together or follow quickly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Work with the Honors</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Program to create vision for Harrison and Oxford Scholars.

- Broaden criteria for recognition of talent.

### Learning Assistance

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Recommendations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the services provided by Learning Assistance perceived necessary and important by the broader University?</td>
<td>Academic support for varsity athletes is exceptional.</td>
<td>Advocate for students to use the Learning Assistance Center – not an admission of weakness or failure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do programs that are focused on helping students succeed fit with an emphasis on lowering grades coupled with increased academic rigor?</td>
<td>CAB Learning Assistance Center is well-placed with other services and is attractive and spacious.</td>
<td>Increase visibility of Learning Assistance Services through residence hall presentations and workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New initiative in “Writing Across the Curriculum”</td>
<td>Provide faculty with more development for writing instruction, especially in large classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Other:

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities and resources vary across campus – makes it difficult to establish a baseline expectation for quality.</td>
<td>Athletic facilities are matched by few, if any, other MAC and mid-western colleges.</td>
<td>Improved lecture and performance hall capability will increase interest and participation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage greater utilization of Shriver Center.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As needs dictate, renovate Shriver Center or add new community space.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>