

Increasing Student Engagement and Success in the First Year

Dr. Blase Scarnati: Director, First Year Learning Initiative, Northern Arizona

Dr. Michelle Miller: Chair, Department of Psychology: Northern Arizona University

In the summer of 2011, Northern Arizona University established a campus-wide First Year Learning Initiative (FYLI) to increase student success through an emphasis on active pedagogies, socializing students to university-level work, student accountability and increased academic rigor, and effective course coordination and alignment. Nearing the one year mark, the program has used curriculum for creative and innovative change, has sparked a high level of faculty and student participation (over 10,000 students were enrolled in FYLI courses in its first semester of Fall 2011), and has seen early indication of positive associations with student success. The first offerings of the FYLI redesigned courses showed a 4% increase in student success.

Drs. Scarnati and Miller lead the program at the Northern Arizona University and have been invited to Wright State to share their successes and lessons learned. Through four presentations they will describe key parts of their program. They will be available for discussion with interested faculty throughout their two-day visit.

All faculty and staff interested in enhancing student success are invited.

Thursday, April 5

127 Medical Sciences

10:30–11:30: First Year Learning Initiative: Overview

In this presentation, Drs. Scarnati and Miller will provide an overview of the First Year Learning Initiative, strategies for implementation, the accomplishments achieved since the inception of the program, and the goals for expanding to additional areas. This objective of this introduction is to:

- * Engage faculty interest and enthusiasm for using curriculum for creative and innovative change through strategies for student success while increasing academic standards.

- * Facilitate faculty teams in creating tangible, actionable plans for reshaping coursework to enhance student success.
- * Build understanding of key concepts drawn from first year seminar pedagogy, community engagement–civic agency work, and course redesign.
- * Offer concrete examples of projects and strategies that have worked in a variety of contexts and disciplines.

2:15–3:30 pm: First Year Seminar Program

The First Year Seminar Program is certified as a First Year Learning Initiative course at Northern Arizona University. The First Year Seminar brings the best faculty teacher-scholars on campus together with first year students to explore rich and engaging topics based upon faculty research, scholarship, interests and/or current issues. Through this seminar undergraduate research is pursued from the beginning of students' careers, communities are established among seminar students, strong mentoring relationships are formed with seminar faculty, and increased numbers of students are retained from the first year into the second year.

In this session, Drs. Scarnati and Miller will present the study skill issues, socialization strategies at the course level, community engagement/civic agency work, and engaging students through their academic disciplines that are incorporated in the First Year Seminars. This session will be informed by practices and outcomes from the First Year Learning Initiative.

Friday, April 6

E156 Student Union (Endeavor Room)

9:45 – 10:35 am: First Year Course Transformation

Faculty from various programs across the Northern Arizona University campus redesigned their classes to meet student engagement and active learning goals of the First Year Learning Initiative. First year classes redesigned to meet these objectives included Accounting, Biology, Anatomy/Physiology, Chemistry, Computer Information Systems, English Composition, Honors Seminar, and Physics. In this interactive session, Drs. Scarnati and Miller will work with faculty on course redesign methodology in the context of the faculty member's own first year course. The course redesign methodology is suitable for a wide range of introductory subjects and courses. Faculty are asked to bring two

copies of a recent first year course syllabus with them to the session for their own use and reference.

1:30–2:30 pm: Introductory Mathematics Course Transformation

Introductory mathematics classes Intermediate Algebra, Algebra for Precalculus, Finite Mathematics, Precalculus Mathematics, Calculus I, and Applied Statistics were redesigned for the First Year Learning Initiative. In the first term after redesign there was an increase of 8% in student success in these courses. The redesign principles for introductory mathematics courses will be presented along with lessons learned in the initial offerings. This is a structured work session with for faculty involved in Wright State's introductory mathematics courses. Mathematics faculty are asked to bring two copies of a recent course syllabus with them to the session for their own use and reference.

I hope that you are able to attend these sessions.

Tom Sudkamp
Associate Provost for
Undergraduate Studies and
the University College