University Freshman Center
and
University Learning Commons

Department Showcase
March 27, 2012
Overview

• University Freshman Center
  [Images of Dr. Charles Pizzo, Andrew Lyons, Gerri Vopelak]

• University Learning Commons
  [Image of Jennifer Newsom]

• New Initiative – Project SAFE
  [Images of Dr. Andrew Ferdinandi, Geraldine Castelli]
University Freshman Center (UFC)

- Created to fulfill the commitment made by St. John’s University to guide first-year students through their transition from high school to higher education.

- Our mission is to welcome each and every student into the St. John’s University community by assisting with students’ overall transition, acclimation and integration into the University setting.
Every freshman is assigned a personal advisor.
- 2,543 F’11 freshmen were assigned to 13 UFC Advisors
  - Average Caseload: 196 students
  - Caseload determine by school and major

We embrace a model of advising called Developmental Advising
- Based on a close student-advisor relationship and communication.
- The focus is to identify each student's educational, career, and personal goals.
The Student and Advisor Form a Partnership.

- The advisors’ responsibilities:
  - Integrating the incoming students into the University community by connecting and engaging them:
    - Academically
    - Personally
    - Socially
  - Assisting with the alignment of career goals and academic programs
  - Explaining University policies, procedures, and tools
  - Addressing expectations and concerns
  - Making appropriate referrals to University support services

- The students’ responsibilities:
  - Attend all scheduled meetings
  - Maintain on-going dialogue with their advisor
  - Take ownership of their college experience (both in and out of the classroom)
  - Utilize campus resources
  - Familiarize themselves with University policies and procedures:
    - Student Handbook
    - University Bulletin
Overview of Calendar Year:

- **May**
  - Launch *Student Programming Survey* for the incoming class
  - Continue outreach to previous entry class who did not register for upcoming fall semester
  - Administer math and chemistry placement tests to select St. John’s College students
  - Participate in Commencement exercises

- **June – Early July:**
  - Create course schedules for incoming freshmen class

- **July:**
  - Continue to create class schedules for new admitted students (rolling admissions)
  - Participate in New Student/Parent Orientation
  - Assist new students with major and/or schedule changes (time and course)

- **August:**
  - Evaluate Advanced Placement scores
  - Participate in Move-In Day/Week of Welcome (Collaboration with Dept. of Student Affairs)
  - Participate in “late sessions” of New Student/Parent Orientation
  - Plan and implement New Student Convocation Luncheon (the day before classes begin)
  - Continue to assist new students with major and/or schedule changes (time and course)
How are First-Year Students Engaged by the UFC?

- **September (February)**
  - First formal meeting of the semester
    - Discussing advisor and student roles
    - Reviewing University support services
    - Developing an academic plan with the student
    - Continuing to assist new students with major and/or schedule changes (time and course)

- **October (March)**
  - Second meeting includes
    - Following-up on items from previous meeting
    - Conducting midterm grade assessment; referral to support services
    - Providing academic advisement for upcoming semester
    - Promoting Study Abroad programs
    - Discussing Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society eligibility

  - Collaborating with Office of Admissions to:
    - present at Open House
    - inform new students who are missing final high school transcripts

  - Collaborating with Department of Health Services to remind newly-enrolled freshmen to submit required medical forms
How are First-Year Students Engaged by the UFC? (Cont.)

- November (April)
  - Third Appointment
    - Semester wrap-up
    - Confirming course selections for Study Abroad applicants
  - Collaborating with the Office of Admission to present at
    - Accepted Students’ Day & Accepted Student Information Sessions
  - Hosting Phi Eta Sigma Induction Ceremony and Dinner (Nov.)
  - Hosting “Meet the Deans” sessions (April)

- December (May)
  - Outreach to student who:
    - Did not register for the upcoming semester
    - Are registered, but not paid for the upcoming semester

- January
  - Reviewing fall grades for all students in caseload
    - Proactively re-access academic plan in preparation for the spring semester
  - Meeting with students to adjust schedules as needed
  - Welcome and creating schedules for incoming, spring freshmen
Student Contacts

Fall 2011
8,202 in-person student contacts
UFC Initiatives

• Within the last year, we have....
  ➢ Created and launched the *Student Programming Survey*
  
  ➢ Enhanced Communication to Faculty including information on:
    • Support services for students
    • Midterm grade submission
  
  ➢ Implemented a pilot student appointment system for the spring 2012 semester
  
  ➢ Each UFC advisor has hosted an event(s) for the students in their caseloads

• Moving forward, the UFC advisors have voted and identified the following three items to address in the 2012-2013 academic year:
  1. Improve early outreach to students
  2. Improve faculty collaboration
  3. Use technology to communicate more effectively with students
Interdepartmental Collaboration

- **Academic Departments regarding:**
  - New student programming
  - Details of new student – faculty luncheon (during New Student Convocation)
  - Updates and changes to academic programs

- **Deans’ Offices**
  - Daily conversations

- **Division of Student Affairs**
  - Student Engagement
  - Student LEADership
  - Resident Life
  - Career Center
  - Center for Counseling & Consultation
  - Student Wellness (SWELL)
  - Student Concerns Committee
  - Learning Communities

- **Office of Admission**

- **Office of Student Financial Services**

- **Office of Institutional Research**
  - Transcript Request Project
  - Member of Data Integrity Group

- **Office of the Registrar**
  - Registrar/Enrollment Management Group
  - Deans’ Offices/Registrar Working Group

- **Department of Public Safety**

- **Office of Global Studies**

And various other offices & departments…
The overall goal of the system is:

- To alert advisors when a student has an issue preventing academic success.
- To facilitate early and time-sensitive interventions such as the utilization of support services.

Undergoing a second revision based on faculty feedback.
## Early Alert Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Alerts</th>
<th>Fall ’09 / Spring’ 10 (as of 3/16/10)</th>
<th>Fall ‘10 / Spring’ 11 (as of 3/16/11)</th>
<th>Fall ‘11/ Spring ’12 (as of 3/16/12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>1044*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Special Status, Visiting, Readmit, and Internal Transfer)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,118</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,851</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,108</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: 260 or 51.7% were generated by UFC initiative: "Reverse Early Alert"*
University Learning Commons
University Learning Commons

- New Name/New Location
- Hours of Operation
- How do students make appointments?
- Choice of meeting place for your academic support appointment
- Who are the tutors? (56)
  - Tutoring Positions
  - Process of being hired
University Learning Commons (Cont.)

• Tracking appointments

• Notification to professors is available

• Subjects offered for tutoring
  - ACT
  - ACC
  - ANT
  - BIO
  - CHEM
  - CUS
  - CRJ
  - ECO
  - ENG
  - GEO
  - GOV
  - HIS
  - LES
  - MTH
  - PHI
  - PHY
  - PSY
  - SCI
  - SPE
  - THE
### University Learning Commons - Visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Swipes</th>
<th>Fall ‘09 / Spring ’10 (as of 3/16/10)</th>
<th>Fall ‘10 / Spring ’11 (as of 3/16/11)</th>
<th>Fall ‘11 / Spring ’12 (as of 3/16/12)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1,478</td>
<td>5,368</td>
<td>2,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing</td>
<td>1,983</td>
<td>2,859</td>
<td>3,493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Graduate, Special Status, Internal Transfer, Readmit, Non-matric, Professional)</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,886</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,219</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,091</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Fall 2010 we rolled out a new initiative aimed toward conditionally-admitted students*
Project SAFE: Student and Faculty Engagement

“SUCCESS... ONE STUDENT AT A TIME”
Project SAFE: Our Mission

...is to provide freshmen students with mentors and staff support to create an atmosphere that is conducive to the students’ successful transition to college life. That success includes maximizing academic achievement and social adjustment.

In partnership with the University Freshman Center and various departments, mentors will engage and guide students with the ultimate goal of providing them with the necessary academic and social skills necessary for the successful completion of their academic careers.
From a student’s point of view:
Deciding whether to continue at a college or university has a significant impact on a student’s ability to feel successful and satisfied about his/her life.

From the institution’s point of view:
Deciding whether to continue at a college or university has a significant impact on a school’s revenue.
2011 – 2012 Academic Year

• Faculty Involvement: We recruited 20 faculty from across the University that had the personality that would be conducive to being a successful member of Project SAFE.

We looked for mentors who do not just work for St. John’s…

but… ARE St. John’s.

Students: 100 students were randomly selected, using a statistical analysis program, from the Fall 2011 entry class.
Why did Project SAFE begin with Faculty?

Because the students indicated:

- Having a relationship with a faculty member means a great deal to them.

- Many students reported not having faculty contact indicated it was a disappointment.
What Does Project SAFE ask of its Mentors?

• One year commitment
  – A year that begins in June……not September

You might be asking yourself what do we mean by commitment?

Good question…
#1: Start with a belief that mentoring can play a role in students feeling successful and satisfied with their college experience.
- Mentors contact the assigned students
- There is at least one in-person conversation prior to school starting (aka Good Will Phone Calls).

#2: Interaction with students is engagement driven not advisement driven
- Mentors will work with no more than 5 students. Less is OK.
- We requested that the mentors accept only what their schedules could handle. The motto is: adding is easy, reducing is more difficult.
What ELSE was Asked of Project SAFE Mentors?

- Good will phone calls (June, July)
- Meet students (and parents) during their orientation
- Present at Move-in day
- First in-person conversation/The Big 6
- Personalize the experience
- Keep notes
- Use/refer to St. John’s resources
- Follow-up and follow through
- Learn the Project SAFE protocol on language and effort
- Maintain the circle of communication
Training?

• Yes, there is training and it is during the summer

• There is a SAFE language that has proven successful. There is a fruitful way to speak with students and parents on the phone. Conversations that help faculty better understand the students

• Always “brand” St. John’s

• Positive, countering, and commitment statements

It’s about engagement; not advisement
Project SAFE Hosts Events Too…

Fall 2011
- Meet & Greet BBQ
- Jones Beach
- Central Park
- Hot Topic: How Well are you Adjusting to College Life?
- Basketball Nights

Spring 2012
- Pizza/Movies Night
- Hot Topic: What is YOUR Hot Topic?
- Nassau Museum
- Softball Game

Students are always encouraged to submit ideas for future trips
“SAFE is awesome and it is the reason I am still at St. John's today. The faculty I was connected with through the Student and Faculty Engagement program were Dr. Ferdinandi, Mary Pelkowski, and of course my freshman advisor. I can say that what meant the most to me was that they didn't just treat me like a number. They actually called and emailed me to see how I was doing, had lunch with me at various times, and even went to the beach with me on one occasion. They each took the time to get to know me, find out my interests, and see how they could individually help me to enjoy my stay at St. John's, and I must say -- it worked!”

- Junior, TVF Major, CPS

I cannot thank you and Dr. Ferdinandi enough for your professionalism, patience, and kindness in helping [my daughter] through a rough first semester at St. John’s. [My daughter] is finishing her junior year, has more friends than I can count, and works in the Film and Television Department on campus. She played an integral part in the startup of Vocal Motion, and is a volunteer in the Theatre Department. As you can see, she certainly has adjusted to life at St. John’s. As such, I state with firm conviction, that the SAFE program was highly effective in helping my daughter remain at the university, and becoming a well-adjusted, happy, young lady. I would certainly hope that the SAFE program continues to exist to help other students like [my daughter] who had a difficult time adjusting to college life.”

- Mother of a Junior, TVF major, CPS
Project SAFE Events and Activities Created to Help Build the Student/Faculty Relationship
What’s the Next Engagement Strategy?

Why not SAFE?

It’s not a question, it’s an answer!
Do You Want to be a Project SAFE Mentor?

Contact us
Safe@stjohns.edu

Let’s chat!