One Step at a Time: Growing a Faculty-Based First Year Experience Programme to a University-Wide Transition Support System

ANZSSA
6-8 December 2013
Wellington
Carol Cameron, Michael Willimott, Margaret Henley
In the Beginning... 2009

- Margaret gets a weird idea
- Applies for seed money ($120,000 for two years)
- Convenes a steering group
- Creates FYE framework
- Hires Carol
2010 FYE is Launched

- First group of mentors recruited
- Test group of students: \( N = 1,000 \)
- First intervention: tracking attendance
- Students surveyed
- Stats showing FYE vs. non-FYE compiled
2011 – The programme grows

- Benchmarking visit to QUT
- Phone interventions added
- Targeted Learning added
- Branding embedded
- Student group grows: N = 1,900
2012 & 2013 FYE Becomes Embedded

- Gets attention at Uni level
- Becomes sought after by academics
- Becomes key for support staff
- Special mentor groups formed
- Faculty roadshow
What You Need to Consider

• What problems are you trying to solve?
• Who are your allies?
• How will you reach your audience?
• What types of intervention?
• How will you measure success?
• What will it cost?
2013 FYE Education Launched
First Year Experience at the Faculty of Education

- Launched in 2013 across all Faculty of Education Undergraduate programmes (N=600)
- 35 Mentors
- 5 undergraduate programmes
  - BPE
  - BSW
  - BHUMS
  - FCED
  - B’Ed (Tchg) – 4 Pathways:
    - Primary
    - Early Childhood education
    - ECE Pasifika
    - Huarahi Maori
First Year Experience at the Faculty of Education

• Key ideas from the FYE at the Faculty of Arts
  – Monitor attendance, Assignment submission, Academic Progress
  – Targeted interventions
  – Targeted Learning Sessions
  – Mentor training
  – Branding

• Adaptations for Faculty of Education
  – Practicum
  – Examinations
  – Predictive analytics
First Year Experience at the Faculty of Education Results

B'Ed (Tchg) 2012/2013 comparison

- A: 2012 (non FYE) vs 2013 (FYE)
- B: 2012 (non FYE) vs 2013 (FYE)
- C: 2012 (non FYE) vs 2013 (FYE)
- Fail: 2012 (non FYE) vs 2013 (FYE)
George Kuh’s Basic Principles for Student Success

1. Student success is everybody’s business
2. Make sure student success is featured prominently in the institution’s mission
3. Strategically invest in student learning
4. Require that evidence guides policy decisions and improvement efforts
5. Stay the course

‘7 Steps for taking Student Learning Seriously’ (2005).
Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts 1N DNS Count</th>
<th>2008 all</th>
<th>2009 all</th>
<th>2010 non-FYE</th>
<th>2010 FYE</th>
<th>2011 FYE</th>
<th>2012 all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>986</td>
<td>812</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts 1N DNS Ratio</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above shows the ratio of DNS as a percentage of all courses for 1N Arts BA and BA-conjoint students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts 1N mean GPA</th>
<th>2008 all</th>
<th>2009 all</th>
<th>2010 non-FYE</th>
<th>2010 FYE</th>
<th>2011 FYE</th>
<th>2012 all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95% confidence interval</td>
<td>3.07 to 3.23</td>
<td>3.14 to 3.31</td>
<td>3.13 to 3.30</td>
<td>3.86 to 4.07</td>
<td>4.06 to 4.16</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above shows the mean average GPA score across all courses for Arts BA and BA-conjoint students (1N) per year. The 2010 figures are broken down by FYE against non-FYE. Subsequent results continue to show a significant improvement.
Carol and Margaret’s basic principles guiding FYE

• Create an environment where student success is everybody’s business
• Create ways for professional and academic staff to work together to achieve academic goals
• Look for ways that FYE can assist with other student focused strategies (and embed in faculty processes)
• Gather and disseminate data to all stakeholders (at every opportunity)
• Maintain core structure
• High visibility in Faculty
• Market successes
• Pilot one new idea per semester

Be relentlessly positive (Carol’s forte!)
FYE Targeted Learning Sessions
Creating best teaching practice out of academic and administrative roadblocks!
Roadblock No 1- for the University

- Increasing cost of unused tutor office hours
- Underutilised professional staff
- Losing money due to poor progression
- Losing valuable International students
- Losing valuable postgraduate students
Roadblock No 2 – for professional staff

- Low student numbers seeking help from academic support services
- Marginalised from teaching & learning
- Poor understanding of integrated help
- Poor communication with academics
- Underutilised
- Students unaware of professional staff skills
- FY student reluctant to go into or use library
Roadblock No 3 – for the students

- Don’t know where to start
- Afraid to go to office hours
- Don’t want to appear remedial
- Are victims of poor assessment
- No roadmap to resources
- Help is not discipline specific
Roadblock No 4 – for academics

- Poor understanding of stage one assessment
- Unaware of need for assessment scaffold
- No help refining assessment
- Low access to students
- Don’t know where students are stuck
- Poor submission rates
- Poor pass rates
The sobering truth

“While students can with difficulty escape from the effects of poor teaching, they cannot (by definition if they want to graduate) escape the effects of poor assessment”.

(David Boud, 1995, p 35)
The cost of poor assessment practices

• Disengagement from learning
• a sense of personal inadequacy
• disempowerment
• perceived inability to negotiate the complexities of university culture
• lower retention rates
• Likely to have higher impact on EAL and Equity students

(adapted from Keithia Wilson, Griffiths University QLD)
Targeted Learning Sessions:
Two main academic Goals

1. Help students complete an assignment
2. Help academics refine assessment
We Built It and They Came
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