Making FYE Initiatives Mandatory: Providing a Comprehensive Support Program for First-Time College Students

Presenters:
Dr. George Gabriel – Vice President of Institutional Research
Robtrice Brawner – Disability Services Counselor
Mark Mannheimer – Coordinator for Student Success
Program Overview

About Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)

Initial Achieving the Dream (ATD) Implementation Plan & Focus Group Findings

Developing NOVA’s ATD Initiatives

Incorporation of ATD recommendations & NOVA’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

Review of ATD Recommendations for Improvements in Student Success

Lessons Learned

Small Group Discussions
About NOVA

Founded: 1964
Number of campuses: 6 (plus 4 educational centers)
Faculty/staff: 2,600
Enrollment: 75,000+ students representing 180+ countries
Degrees/Certificates offered: 160
Accreditation: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
President: Dr. Robert Templin

We also offer distance learning programs through our Extended Learning Institute and continuing education courses through Workforce Development.

NOVA is the largest educational institution in Virginia and the second-largest community college in the United States.
History of ATD @ NOVA

08/07 - Introduced by Dr. Templin as a tool to implement NOVA’s Strategic Vision 2015: Gateway to the American Dream.

Goal:
1. Student Success

03/08 - Original Implementation Plan submitted

Goals:
1. Improve success rates in developmental mathematics
2. Increase student persistence rates
Examining Student Persistence Rates

Student (Fall 2007) & Faculty (Spring 2008) Focus Groups
Topic: Barriers to Student Success in the 1st Semester

Major-issues identified
1. Students need better advising
2. Students lack knowledge of how to get started at NOVA
3. Students lack knowledge of where to go and what to do at the beginning of their time at NOVA

Other common issues
1. poor study skills & time-management
2. lack of understanding of “college expectations”
ATD Initial Action Plan: Interventions to Promote Student Success

Priority Area: Student Persistence

Develop & refine a comprehensive first year experience program for new students based upon research and best practices, stressing:

- pre-college orientation (SOAR/NSO)
- first-year experience course (SDV)
- academic planning
- goal discernment
- study skills
- college resources
FYE Program:
First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA
Prior to ATD, pre-college orientation was conducted differently from campus-to-campus:

- **NSO @ Woodbridge Campus**
  - One-day, one-stop-shop campus engagement event
- **STEPS @ Annandale Campus**
  - Small-group, half-day session focused on academic advising essentials
- Orientation integrated with college-immersion course
- Various engagement-based programs
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA
Spring 2009 – NOVA established the College-Wide New Student Orientation (NSO) Task Force

- Task Force Membership consisted of a lead dean, counselors, advisors & enrollment specialists representing all 6 campuses
- Charge: Develop a comprehensive college-wide orientation program at the six campuses of NOVA. The program is to include common student learning outcomes, assessment/evaluation tools as well as an agenda
- Task Force examined current models and retention data to identify best practices
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA
College-wide Retention – Fall 2008 Cohort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall 2008 to Spring 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2008 to Fall 2009</th>
<th>Fall 2008 to Spring 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSO Attendees</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All First-Time NOVA Students</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA

Spring 2009 – The Task Force recommends the College adopt the NSO model used at the Woodbridge Campus (highest retention rate)

- Each campus conducted 6-9 NSO sessions in advance of Fall 2009
  - 2-3 NSO Sessions per campus in advance of Spring 2010
- NSO’s were to be four-hour, all-in-one programs
- Each NSO was to provide various engagement activities, advising and registration opportunities, optional tours, and a parent program
- Target population was to be 18-23 year old recent high school graduates, entering college for the first time
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA
Spring 2009 – Program Evaluation

• Successes
  • Developed standard learning outcomes, agenda/format & evaluation tools
  • Program impacted over 2,100 first-time to college students
  • Improved communication and collaboration between campuses, units

• Challenges
  • Budgeting, planning and marketing
  • Program was not mandatory – limited impact on target population
  • Timing & size of NSO sessions
  • Limited time for advising & enrollment
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA

Spring 2010 – Development of Student Orientation Advising & Registration (SOAR) Program

- SOAR was based on a program developed at the Annandale Campus
- 1 ½ hour, computer-lab based session focused on enrollment
  - Understanding academic programs, services and policies
  - Interpreting placement test scores
  - Course selection & registration
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA

Spring 2010 – Integrating SOAR & NSO

- Campuses offer SOAR sessions based on projected enrollment
- NSO remains as the campus engagement piece
- Both programs are marketed together as new student programming
- Programs are coordinated through the campus Task Force representative in cooperation with counseling & student services and student activities offices
- SDV incentive for attending both SOAR & NSO
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA

Spring 2010 – Program Evaluation

• Successes
  • SOAR provided for more adequate coverage of enrollment-related topics
  • NSO incorporated more campus-level programs & resources
  • Program impacted over 3,300 first-time to college students

• Challenges
  • Budgeting, planning and marketing
  • Program was not mandatory – limited impact on target population
  • Effective management of online sign-up
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

NSO Data: Retention Rate of First-Time Students: Fall to Spring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NSO Attendees</th>
<th>All Other First-Time Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>85.70%</td>
<td>68.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>88.50%</td>
<td>69.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>87.40%</td>
<td>71.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of Institutional Research, Northern Virginia Community College
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

NSO Data: Average GPA of First-time Students: Fall Semester (4.0 scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NSO Attendees</th>
<th>All Other First-Time Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of Institutional Research, Northern Virginia Community College
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

SOAR Data: Average GPA of First-time Students: Fall Semester (4.0 scale)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SOAR Attendees</th>
<th>All Other First-Time Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of Institutional Research, Northern Virginia Community College
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

SOAR Data: Retention Rate of First-Time Students: Fall to Spring

Source: Office of Institutional Research, Northern Virginia Community College
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA

Spring 2011 – Continuation of the two-part model
- SOAR program was updated to reflect curricular changes and to incorporate F-1 and financial aid information
- SOAR sessions in local high schools (Pathway to Baccalaureate)
- Development of Online SOAR
- Incorporation of academic divisions in NSO break-out sessions college-wide
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
“SOAR & NSO – The Two-part Approach”

Background @ NOVA
Spring 2011 – Program Evaluation

• Successes
  • Online SOAR will provide access to program & materials any time, anywhere
  • College-wide structure further solidified in 2nd year
  • Incorporation of Student Ambassadors into both SOAR & NSO programs
  • Increased enrollment into SDV and FYE SDV courses

• Challenges
  • Program was not mandatory – limited impact on target population
  • Tracking attendees who return to counseling/students services after SOAR/NSO
FYE Program:
First-Year Experience Courses

SDV – Student Development Courses
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA

In the past, NOVA had offered a version of the SDV course that served as an orientation to college experience

- SDV courses are one-credit hour, taught by counselors and required for all degree/certificate programs consisting of 15 credits or more
- Policy dictated that SDV courses were required before enrollment in the 16th credit hour – however, this policy has not been enforced
- SDV curriculum covered a variety of relevant first-year topics, but varied from campus-to-campus
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA
2008-2009 – As ATD initiatives took shape, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) conducted a program-review of the SDV curriculum

• In response to both ATD & the VCCS, the College established:
  • FYE Task Force
  • Student Development Custer
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
FYE SDV – Student Development Course

Background @ NOVA

Fall 2009 - Established college-wide FYE Task Force

Charge: Research and apply best-practices of FYE programs and apply these to a small number of SDV course sections on each campus

- “The Three C’s” – Connection, Critical Thinking and Community Building
  » Convocation, shared-experience and peer-mentoring
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA
2009 – Student Development Cluster

Tasks:
• Review SDV syllabi
• Determine acceptable formats
• Compile list of learning outcomes
• Develop standard evaluation for all SDV courses
• Determine qualifications and backgrounds for adjuncts
• Determine when waivers are appropriate
• Provide recommendations to address the capacity issue (more returning and new students needing SDV than counselors available to teach)
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA
2009 – Student Development Cluster

Review SDV syllabi
• A common, college-wide syllabus was establish for SDV 100 & SDV 101

Determine Acceptable Formats
• Data indicated there was no significant difference in retention or GPA when comparing various sessions and formats
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA
2009 – Student Development Cluster

Learning Outcomes
- Campus/College Community, Policies and Procedures
- Skills for Academic Success
- Self-Management
- Decision-making (Academic, personal and career)

Evaluation
- Standardized course evaluation
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA

2009 – Student Development Cluster

Qualifications and backgrounds for adjuncts

- Mirrored those of full-time faculty
- Master’s degree and 18 credits hours in the discipline

Waivers

- Established/updated policy across College
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA
2009 – Student Development Cluster

Capacity Issues

36.9% indicate that approximate class size for their sections is 16-20 students
29.8% indicate that approximate class size for their sections is 21-25 students
18.2% indicate that approximate class size for their sections is 10-15 students
7.5% indicate that approximate class size for their sections is 21-25 students
6.8% indicate that approximate class size for their sections is over 30 students [NOVA]

Source: 2006 National Survey on First-Year Seminar (National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience/University of South Carolina)
## FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses

### SDV – Student Development Courses

**Background @ NOVA**

2009 – Student Development Cluster

### Capacity Issues - Typical SDV Class Sizes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 20 students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29 students</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 students</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 or more students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fall 2009 SDV Faculty Survey (NOVA)
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA

2009 – Student Development Cluster

Capacity Issues – Satisfaction w/ SDV Class Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Satisfied</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Dissatisfied</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fall 2009 SDV Faculty Survey (NOVA)
**FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses**

**SDV – Student Development Courses**

**Background @ NOVA**

2009 – Student Development Cluster

**Capacity Issues – Common Responses**

- Classes are too large
- 30 was good, 45 is too many - I taught 2
- 15 to 20 would be ideal
- Cap at 25.
- 30+ is too many
- I would prefer 20-29 students

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Source: Fall 2009 SDV Faculty Survey (NOVA)
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA
2009 – Student Development Cluster
Capacity Issues – Challenges on the horizon
  • Increasing student enrollment
  • Enforcement of the 16th credit hour requirement
  • Limited full-time faculty
  • Limited resources for adjunct faculty
  • Limited classroom space on-campus
FYE Program: First-Year Experience Courses
SDV – Student Development Courses

Background @ NOVA

Fall 2010 – Student Development Cluster

National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) SDV Redesign

- NOVA is exploring elements of a replacement model to help bolster outcomes-based learning and achieve desired enrollment targets
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
SDV – Student Development Courses

SDV Data: GPA of First-time Students: Fall Semester (4.0 scale)

Source: Office of Institutional Research, Northern Virginia Community College
FYE Program: Pre-college Orientation
SDV – Student Development Courses

SDV Data: Fall to Spring Retention: Fall 2010 to Spring 2011

Enrolled in SDV 100
All Other First-Time Students

Source: Office of Institutional Research, Northern Virginia Community College
Impact of NOVA’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP)

- GPS for Success: Teaching and Learning through Academic Advising
  - SACS Reaffirmation for Accreditation
  - An action plan to enhance students’ academic planning skills
  - New staff: Student Success Coordinators and Advising Specialists
ATD Recommendations for Improvements in Student Success

- Presented to NOVA’s Administrative Council in Fall 2011
- Based on 3-year evaluations of ATD initiatives, the following recommendations are made by the ATD Core Team at NOVA:
  1. Mandate NSO for first-time students*
  2. Mandate placement testing for first-time students
  3. Mandate enrollment in developmental courses during first semester, if placed
  4. Enforce current policy on SDV enrollment within first year for first-time students
  5. Eliminate late registration
  6. Mandate early advising for first-time students

* First-time students refer to students who have never attended a college previously. Approximately 85% of these students are recent high school graduates
Future @ NOVA
The FYE Umbrella

- SOAR
- NSO
- GPS For Success
- SDV
- Common Experiences
- Peer Mentors
- Early Alert
Lessons Learned

- Trust in best practices
- Collect and ANALYZE your data
- Empower your Task Forces - College-wide initiatives work best when you have college-wide perspective
- Be accountable!
- Value your time & never spot planning – growth won’t stop; neither should you!
- Utilize and value your resources
Questions?

- Small Focus Groups
  - Orientation (SOAR/NSO)
  - Academic Advising (QEP)
  - College success-skills courses (SDV)
  - College-wide & campus-level support (Buy-in)