

The SDES Connection

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Parents and Families as Partners in Learning

“Pegasus Parent was established to aid parents in making a seamless transition to the university,” said Laine Powell, director of Partnership Development, Campus Life.

The Pegasus Parent Program, provided by the Office of Campus Life, was established in fall 2006 to provide an opportunity for parents to stay connected with their student at UCF. Initially, the focus of the program was to provide information to parents of UCF freshmen; however, the information provided is available and pertinent to all parents.

In order to gauge the interests and needs of parents, incoming UCF students’ parents were surveyed during summer orientations in 2006. They were asked to fill out a brief questionnaire relating to the type of information they would like to receive from UCF. From the results of the survey, Campus Life created a program that would benefit parents and families. Parents and families were primarily interested in health and well-being, finances, and updates on what’s happening on campus. To keep parents informed and connected to the UCF community, Campus Life created the *Pegasus Parent Connections* newsletter, which is found on the Pegasus Parent Web site: www.parents.sdes.ucf.edu.

The newsletter introduces parents to programs and services of Student Development and Enrollment Services that are available to students; campus

updates and events; and articles on specific topics, such as depression and anxiety, or alcohol use and the AlcoholEdu course. The upcoming newsletter will focus on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and financial literacy for students and parents.

“During Family Weekend 2006, we had an opportunity to interview parents about their (and their student’s) experiences with UCF and solicit feedback on how we can connect parents with the university,” stated Powell. “We try to provide information either via the Pegasus Parent Connections newsletter or podcast,” stated Powell. According to Powell, the podcasts have been a huge success for the Pegasus Parent Program. Campus Life recently finished a series of tapings to be included on the Web site this month and have coined the series of recordings, “Pegasus Parent University.” A variety of topics are available for parents including information on filling out taxes, creating a budget, health challenges on a college campus, eating disorders, depression and anxiety, roommate issues, housing concerns, FERPA in the Registrar’s Office, Multicultural Academic and Support Services, Office of Student Financial Assistance, Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, and many others. Campus Life hopes to continue to offer a variety of topics throughout the year.

Additionally, to further connect parents to the UCF community, the Pegasus Parent



The Blandino family visited UCF on Family Weekend, October 20-22, 2006. Family Weekend is a UCF tradition that welcomes families and gives them the opportunity to explore the UCF campus and experience the university community.

Ambassador Program was created. This program serves as a primary resource for parents with questions or concerns specific to a UCF or Student Development and Enrollment Services (SDES) department; identifies ways in which the university can engage parents to support student success; and increases participation in programs for parents. Various SDES departments were asked to assign an ambassador to work with the parents program. A list of ambassadors is available on the parent Web site and will continue to serve as an added resource for parents.

For more information about the Pegasus Parent Program, contact Laine Powell at: fpowell@mail.ucf.edu or 407.823.2626.

Family Responses

At the 2006 Family Weekend, parents and families were asked, “How has the transition been for you as a parent of a UCF student?” Responses were as follows:

“It’s been a good experience. We’re close to the Orlando area so we come to see Andrew and Andrew comes to see us. Andrew’s enjoying it here. He’s loving it!”

“It’s going pretty well actually. We prepared early. We visited the campus several times and attended orientation. We got the lay of the land.”

Roles and Responsibilities of Ambassadors

- A minimum of one year commitment as an ambassador
- Serve as primary contact for parent issues within your department
- Available to answer questions, comments, concerns from prospective and current parents
- Serve on the Pegasus Parent Advisory Committee

UCF Participates in National Study of Latino/Hispanic Student Success

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) conducted a graduation rate outcomes study of 12 colleges and universities. The results were published in a 2005 document, *Student Success in State Colleges and Universities*. As a result, AASCU was asked to conduct a follow-up study to identify successful approaches to retaining and graduating Latino/Hispanic students.

The University of Central Florida was one of 10 universities chosen to participate in the follow-up study. UCF was chosen based on the following criteria:

- A graduation rate of at least 40 percent in 2003 for the underrepresented group;
- A graduation gap rate of no more than five percentage points;
- At least three percent of the Latino/Hispanic group represented in the 2002 and 2003 cohorts;
- An overall six-year graduation rate that is either greater than the median rate for the 25 most similar institutions, or not more than five percentage points less.

The Division of Student Development and Enrollment Services (SDES) coordinated University Self-Study and follow-up site visit from an AASCU team. The Self-Study Committee, chaired by Pat Pates, Office of Assessment and Planning (AP), developed a comprehensive report that was submitted prior to the visiting team's arrival at UCF. Other members of the Self-Study Committee included: Lisa Atkins, formerly in AP; Ron Atwell, AP; Valarie King, Office of Diversity Initiatives; Lisa Minnick, Student Financial Assistance; Mark Allen Poisel, Academic Development and Retention (ADR); Jacqueline Smith, ADR; and Daniel Suleski, AP.



Left to Right Front: Fernando Perez, Lily Goetz, Michelle Whittingham, Marie Provencio, Chela Mendoza Patterson and Pat Pates
Back: Mark Allen Poisel, Jerome Ratchford, Tomas Morales and Pedro Martinez

The AASCU team of eight members under the leadership of Pedro Martinez visited UCF February 28 - March 1. They were provided a copy of the pre-visit study with supporting documentation, including Charts I-III (see following page) which were results of the University Self-Study. The team met with administrators, faculty, staff and students who are involved in programs that contribute to Latino/Hispanic student success. Overall, the team was very impressed with the scope and depth of the student support services provided at UCF.

AASCU Latino/Hispanic Study Visiting Team

Team Leader: Pedro Martinez, provost, Winston Salem State University, Winston Salem, NC

Team Members:

- **Lily Goetz**, director for International Affairs, Professor of Spanish, Longwood University, Farmville, VA
- **Chela Mendoza Patterson**, director for: Educational Opportunity Program, Student Learning Center, Student Support Services Program, California State University at Chico, CA
- **Tomas Morales**, provost/vice president, California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, CA
- **Fernando Perez**, advisor, Latino/Hispanic American Students in the Office of Multicultural affairs, East Stroudsburg University, East Stroudsburg, PA
- **Marie Provencio**, freshman advisor, Education Opportunity Program, California State University at Fresno, CA
- **Jerome Ratchford**, interim dean, Student Success and Enrollment Services, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA
- **Michelle Whittingham**, associate vice president for Enrollment Services, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA



UCF hosts visiting team at welcome dinner.

The team reported that while there are features identified that specifically impact Latino students, many of UCF's retention initiatives are directed at all students. Consequently, this also positively impacts Latino students. They identified numerous features that contributed to successful retention and graduation for UCF Latino/Hispanic students and remarked that students are highly motivated, really want to be at UCF and see themselves as an integral part of the student body despite its cultural differences. The team also praised the campus culture, describing a real cohesiveness and connection between students and faculty exhibited by a critical mass of faculty (regardless of ethnic background) who are committed to being actively involved with Latino students, participating in student activities, and serving as mentors. They were particularly impressed that despite the size of the campus, people knew each other.

In addition to hosting a visiting team, President John C. Hitt appointed Mark Allen Poisel to be the UCF representative on one of the site teams visiting another institution. Poisel visited the State University of New York (SUNY) New Paltz, just days after a team visited UCF. According to Poisel, participation in this project was worthwhile both for him and for the institution. "I learned so much more about retention issues for our Hispanic students and learned that UCF has a focus on retaining students that truly impacts student success," said Poisel. "We do a great job compared to other institutions when it comes to providing programs and services to our students. We also treat visiting teams very well here at UCF. The team commented very positively on the information we provided for them to review, and also the kindness they received from everyone they met while at UCF."

AASCU will be compiling all of the team reports from the 10 visits to create one large report to share with their member institutions around the country. This project is very timely as many institutions are looking for ways to increase the retention and graduation rates of their students, particularly Hispanic students who are the fastest growing minority population.

Chart I

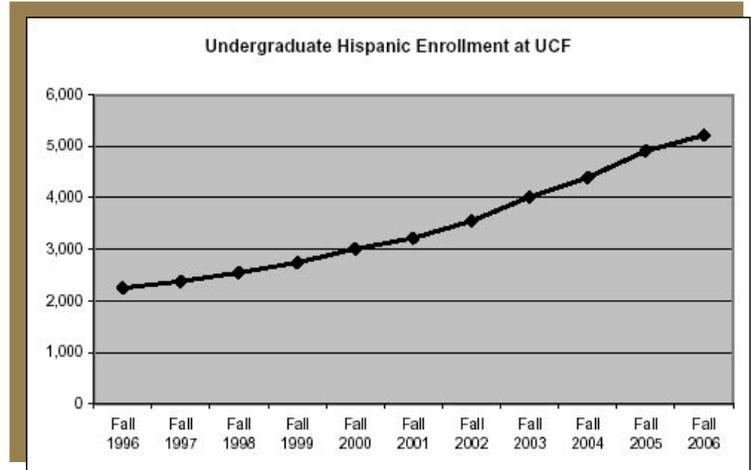


Chart II

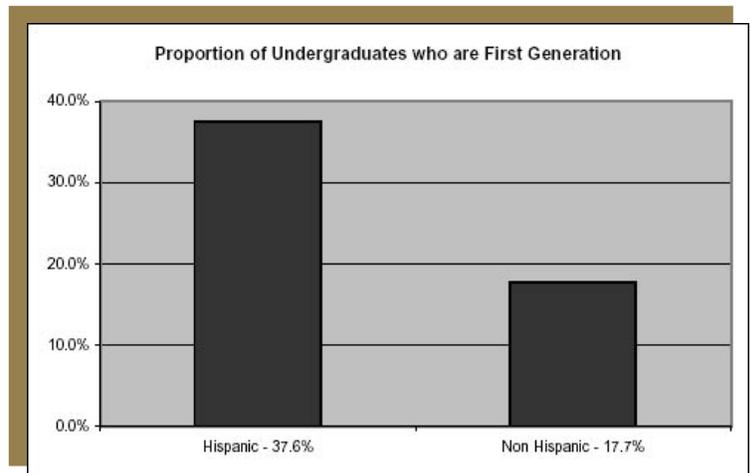
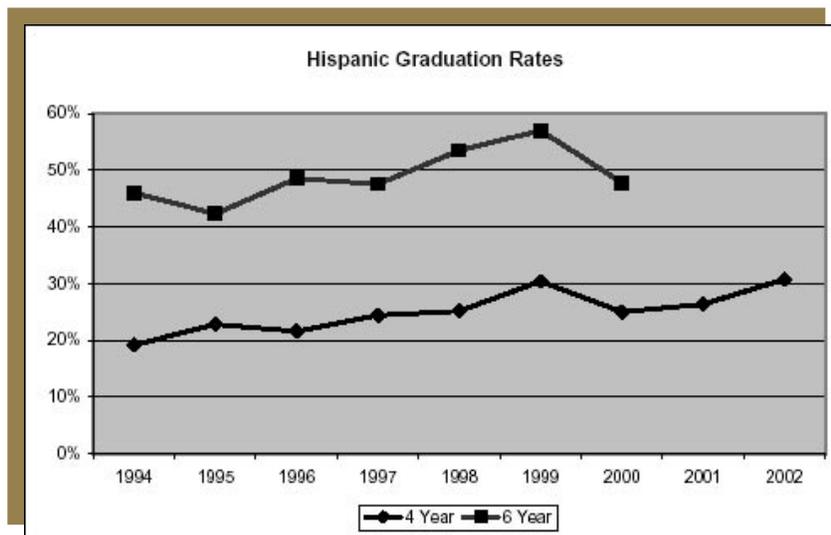


Chart III



Quality Enhancement Plan – Information Fluency Pilot Project for the Student Success Course

Information Fluency is the ability to gather, evaluate and use information legally and ethically. With the advent of the information age where resources are available to students, the question of reliable and accurate information has become a major concern for educators. Coupled with the advances in technology, this has challenged the ability of students to use data ethically and legally. The results are improper use of copyrighted material and increased plagiarism.

To address these concerns, the university has implemented a five-year quality enhancement plan to infuse Information Fluency into the university curriculum. The Division of Student Development and Enrollment Services and the Office of Orientation Services has partnered with university faculty and staff to implement a pilot project with the university freshmen success course. The goals of the Information Fluency Pilot Project are:

- Introduce students to study skills and strategies that will enable them to be more successful in their academic pursuits;
- Increase student understanding of the learning process and encourage their use of critical thinking skills;
- Develop ability to effectively use technology resources including electronic mail and World Wide Web;
- Examine the role of the liberal arts foundation to higher education and life long learning.

The freshmen success course (SLS 1501) is designed to help first-year students make a successful transition to the university by developing academic, social and personal skills that contribute to academic success. It was believed that the inclusion of Information Fluency was appropriate.

The course curriculum encourages students to establish supportive relationships with faculty and peers; help them to become part of the academic community; and provide them with essential information about the academic standards of the university's policies, procedures and resources. The objectives of the course are to enable and encourage students to:

- Maximize their opportunity for a successful university experience;
- Develop confidence and strengthen their purpose for attending college;
- Build a supportive community of peers who will assist them in their transition to college;
- Develop the skills, knowledge and competencies to become independent, active learners.

A faculty team was formed in 2006 to review and develop Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and revisit the course syllabus to add Information Fluency learning outcomes within the current SLS course objectives.

This is a multi-year project designed to develop Information Fluency curriculum to introduce freshmen to the subject in their first or second semester at the university.

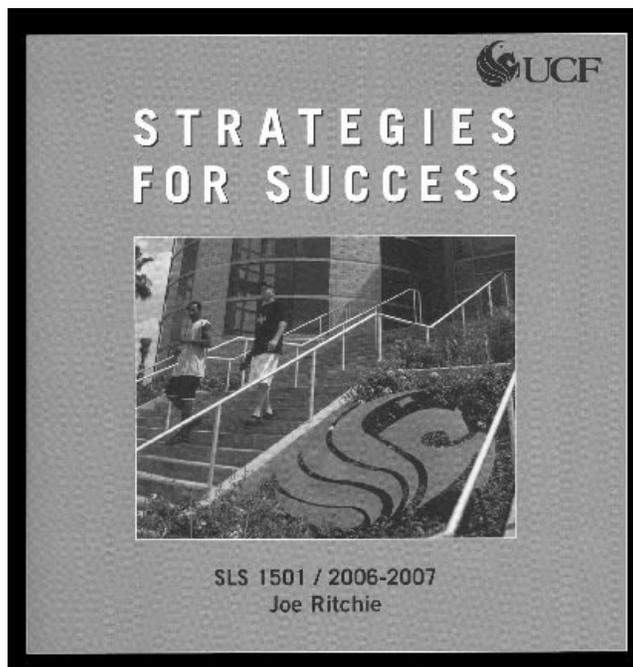
In year one, the focus was on developing Information Fluency curriculum items in the SLS 1501 course and conducting a pilot program in spring 2007 for four sections of the class. The focus for the curriculum was on those learning objectives that are associated with introducing students to Information Fluency.

Year two will focus on developing and implementing the Information Fluency curriculum items in all sections (currently 40 sections) of the Student Success Course (SLS 1501) in fall 2007. Year two will also include reviewing and developing assessment methodology for implementation in year three.

In year three, the faculty team will conduct the assessments and complete a thorough analysis of the overall impact on student learning outcomes and on the efficacy of the various pedagogical and curricular initiatives.

It is anticipated that the program faculty, with the assistance of an information literacy specialist from the library and the support of the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (FCTL), will develop instructional strategies to implement pedagogical changes. These changes are likely to be on a course by course basis.

With the assistance of Operational Excellence and Assessment Support (OEAS) and FCTL, the program faculty will refine the assessment measures and instruments and begin to initiate SLO assessment actions. It is expected that assessment will be fully embedded in the program at the end of the second year.



What if?
www.if.ucf.edu
information fluency