

# **FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE**

## **REPORT**

May 2003

*Committee Members:* Kip Alishio, Mary Jane Berman, Hoyt Brown, Rick Browne, Jeannie Brown Leonard, Michael Cubberly, Tracy Davis, Gail Della Piana, Steven DeLue, Yildirim Dilek, Linda Dixon, Dan Early, Jackie Elcik, Carolyn Haynes (co-chair), Kathleen Knight-Abowitz, Enid LaGesse, Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson, Kenneth Linsley, Peter Magolda, Kristin McCartney, Denny Roberts (co-chair), Lisa Santucci, Judith Sessions, Elizabeth Stanley, Ben Vodila

### **Executive Summary**

#### *Overview*

In fall 2002, Dean Pamela Fox (chair of the First in 2009 Coordinating Council) charged the First-Year Experience Committee to consider a multi-year implementation of Choice Matters, plan for a pilot program of first-year seminars in 2004-05, and propose a comprehensive blueprint to provide small group learning experiences for first-year students.

In order to accomplish these aims, the committee divided itself into four subcommittees with specific goals: (1) researching existing studies and data on the current first-year experience of Miami students; (2) reviewing existing small courses for Miami's first-year students; (3) creating a proposal and supporting textual materials for institution of a first-year seminar; and (4) improving the existing plan for first-year co-curricular planning (also known as "Choice Matters").

#### *Outcomes*

The FYE subcommittees collectively accomplished the following:

- Reviewed three key national surveys (NSSE, CSS, YFCY) that Miami students complete regularly and created summaries of relevant information about our students' first-year experience (see Appendix A for summaries);
- Evaluated existing small-class "enrichment" seminars designed primarily for first-year students on this campus (e.g., Theme Learning Community seminars, study skills and career development seminars, online library modules) and generated recommendations (see Appendix B for evaluation and recommendations);
- Created a proposal for the First-Year Seminar that was reviewed and approved by Deans and Chairs as well as supporting materials which will be posted on the First in 2009 website as a resource for faculty (see Appendix C for proposal which includes supporting information).
- Assessed the Choice Matters co-curricular initiatives begun in 2002 and generated suggestions for improvements over the next few years (see Appendix D for summary of initiatives and planned improvements);

#### *Summary of Findings and Blueprint for Change*

- In many significant ways, Miami is doing an admirable job of meeting first-year students' needs. Miami first-year students report being academically challenged more than first-year students from 93% of other institutions in the same Carnegie class (NSSE 2001). They indicate significantly higher levels of interaction with faculty than students in other similar settings (NSSE 2001; YFCY 2002), and they are more likely to have courses that include collaborative projects, written assignments and field experience (YFCY 2002). Over half of the 2001 first-year students gave Miami a grade of "B" or better on the quality of their in-class experiences (CSS 2001).

- Despite these successes, there is still room for improvement. Less than a third of first-year students anticipated working on a research project with a faculty member; and less than half report “never” or “only sometimes” contributing to class discussions (NSSE 2001). Miami students seem to experience more homesickness and loneliness (YFCY 2002), and almost half (46%) of first-year students admit to spending at least six hours a week “partying,” in comparison to 22% at other institutions (CSS 2001). Equally troubling is the fact that only 31.4% of first-year students reported socializing with a person of another ethnic or racial group in the past year, and first-year Miami women are significantly less likely to interact with faculty and view themselves as potential academic and campus leaders.
- Miami already offers an impressive array of small class experiences designed for entering students, including Honors seminars, Western College Program seminars, various departmental offerings, Theme Learning Community courses, career development or college preparation courses. Approximately 75% of Miami first-year students currently have the opportunity to enroll in one of these small learning experiences. In addition to these opportunities, there are online library modules available for further enrichment.
- These small class experiences serve important functions in helping to enrich the first-year experience. However, some of them (particularly Theme Learning Community courses and college adjustment courses, such as EDL 100 and 110) lack sufficient resources and administrative support to reach their full potential. Instructors need to be compensated and provided appropriate development, and an incentive system needs to be implemented to attract faculty participation. By doing this, the number of these types of small class experiences can be increased by 20 and the quality improved significantly over the next six years.
- A first-year seminar initiative which would offer Miami Plan Foundation seminars that focus on an intellectual theme, problem or issue, are unlike any other courses currently taught, and are based on the passion and expertise of the faculty members and of keen interest to first-year students would help to further enrich students’ learning and to set high expectations for college life. Ten seminars will be offered in AY2004-2005 on the Oxford campus; 15 are proposed for 2005-2006, 20 for 2006-2007, 25 for 2007-2008, and 30 for 2008-2009. The number of seminars will increase steadily as human and financial resources allow. Peter Magolda, the FYE Co-Coordinator in Academic Affairs, will serve as a consultant to deans, chairs and faculty. No special approval or assessment process will be required. Faculty will be invited to participate in an optional series of sharing sessions to exchange ideas and assignments.
- Because students learn from out-of-class experiences as well as from in-class experiences, it is important that Student and Academic Affairs staff work together to present students with unified messages about learning and college life. The “Choice Matters” programming that was initiated in 2002 (learning goals worksheet, special advising efforts and programs in the residence halls, mega-fair, and student organization intervention) will be continued and strengthened by incorporating findings from behavior change theories (Garrity; Prochaska & Diclemente). This programming will be coordinated by Hoyt Brown, the FYE Co-Coordinator in Student Affairs.
- Successful implementation of all of the initiatives and recommendations listed above will significantly deepen students’ learning, galvanize a community of faculty and student scholars to enhance intellectual inquiry, and provide every first-year Miami student with the valuable opportunity to interact intellectually with a faculty member in a small class setting by 2009.

## Appendix A

### Research and Assessment Subcommittee: First Year Experience Committee April 21, 2003

#### Subcommittee Members:

Jeannie Brown Leonard, Michael Cubberley (Graduate Assistant), Denise Krallman (Consultant), Enid LaGesse, Peter Magolda (Chair), Judith Sessions

#### Progress Report

The subcommittee met five times this term. We began our work by reviewing the three national surveys that Miami University student complete annually. The subcommittee identified questions from these three surveys that were relevant to the FYE committee's work (these items are included later in this report). Subcommittee members drafted two-page summaries for each of the three instruments (NSSE, CSS 2001 Survey, YFCY). These summaries include a: [1] brief introduction the instrument; [2] basic information about participation levels; [3] global overview of findings; and [4] a discussion of 1-3 specific findings that are most relevant to the FYE Committee's work. Each summary highlights findings that the University should consider as it recruits and selects instructors for first-year seminars. These summaries are contained later in this report. Only one item needs completing. Peter Magolda is working with Denise Krallman on extracting local data from the MU databases that will be invaluable to the FYE Committee and future instructors of first-year seminars. Denise's report will be available June 1, 2003. It will include specific information about existing opportunities for faculty and students as it relates to first-year seminars (e.g., number of faculty who teach classes with less than 25 students, percentage of first-year students who are enrolled in classes smaller than 25, number of small seminars offered to first-year students, etc.). Once this local report is complete, Peter Magolda will submit an addendum to this brief report.

The Research and Assessment Subcommittee is pleased with its work this term and will continue to work over the summer to integrate these research findings into FYE initiatives.

### 2001 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Prepared by Jeannie Brown Leonard

#### Overview of Instrument

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) asks college and university students to report on their activities. The survey is "grounded in the proposition that the frequency with which students engage in activities that represent effective educational practice is a good proxy for collegiate quality" (NSSE 2001 Overview, p. 5). Institutional data for Miami University are compared with responses from institutions that share our Carnegie Classification (Doctoral/Research Intensive) and with the national pool of institutions participating in the NSSE project.

The instrument is administered to first-year students and seniors. In 2001, 177,103 students from 321 four-year colleges and universities participated in the NSSE project. In most cases, participating institutions had the option of administering the NSSE over the web or as a paper survey. At Miami University in 2001, 1,000 students received the survey and 458 (47%) responded. Of this 458, 232 were first-year students and 226 were seniors. Seventy-nine percent of Miami respondents used a traditional paper questionnaire and 21% responded via the web. Miami's response rate is consistent with other Doctoral/Research Institutions (41%) and with the overall NSSE response rate (42%). At Miami, 71% of the respondents were female, compared with 61% for institutions in our same Carnegie Classification and 65% in the national NSSE pool.

## Overview of Findings

- On most measures, students at Miami University are engaging in behaviors linked with good educational practice at a rate that is equal to or greater than (sometimes much greater than) our peers. On the survey items that provide indicators of **academic challenge**, our first-year students report scores that are higher than about 93% of the NSSE schools in our Carnegie Class and higher than 84% of all NSSE participants.
- On measures indicating **active and collaborative learning**, Miami's first-year students indicate engagement that is about 69% greater than other institutions like us and about 50% greater than all institutions in the NSSE sample.
- First-year students also indicate levels of **interaction with faculty members** that are 69% higher than those institutions in Doctoral/Research Intensive category and about 50% higher than the overall sample.
- Although Miami scores well relative to the comparison groups provided by NSSE, these institutions are not the same ones with which Miami prefers to be compared. Rather than being content with our performance, Miami could set institutional improvement goals using the NSSE data to indicate areas where we might want to improve.

## Relevant Findings: First-Year Experience

- Much of the data from NSSE affirms that Miami is offering engaging and satisfying experiences to students. Yet, the University certainly can improve. One indicator of active learning is whether a student speaks up in class. Although more first-year students at Miami (60.3%) report that they asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions "often" or "very often" compared to other Doctoral/Research Intensive institutions and all NSSE participants (54.9% and 58.2% respectively), is Miami really satisfied that nearly 40% of all first-year students **never** or only **sometimes** asked questions in class or contributed to class discussion?
- The NSSE data also reveal that some student expectations regarding their academic life are not being met. For example, as first-year students, 28.5% anticipate working on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements. Seniors report that only 19.4% actually have this opportunity. Miami seniors score slightly lower on this item for compared to other institutions in our Carnegie Classification as well as the overall NSSE population. One possible benefit of the first-year seminar proposed by the First-Year Experience Committee is that through the seminar, students will learn about research opportunities and receive support in seeking out such experiences. It also is interesting to note that the mental activities students report engaging in most frequently do not change much from first-year to senior year at Miami. As one might expect, assignments requiring memorization are more abundant in the first year and decline by senior year. Yet, work requiring synthesis, judgment about the value of information, and analysis saw very modest, if any, gains from first year to senior year. Seniors are a little bit more accustomed to mental activity requiring application of theories than are the first-year students.

**Your First College Year 2002**  
**Sponsored by the Higher Education Research Institute and**  
**The Policy Center on the First Year of College**

Prepared by Enid LaGesse and Judith Sessions

## Introduction to the Report

As the only national survey designed specifically to assess the academic and personal development of full-time students over the first year of college, the "Your First College Year" survey is administered during their second semester. The responses to the 42 questions, composed of 21 questions asked of all

participating institutions and 21 questions particular to Miami University, provide "...information on a wide range of cognitive and affective measures, providing comprehensive data for single- or multiple-institution analyses of persistence, adjustment, and other first-year outcomes." (<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/yfcy/>).

### **Basic Information about participation levels**

Administered at Miami University during spring 2002, of the 1,174 respondents, 59% were female. This finding, of more female than male respondents, was also true for both other participating public universities as well as all universities/4-year colleges. The "Global Overview" listed below examines the means profile and lists the statistically significant differences (99% confidence level) between all students at Miami and all students at public universities (N=7,375). "Relevant Findings" examines the means profile and lists the statistically significant (99% confidence level) gender differences.

### **Global Overview**

On the first 21 questions asked of all participating institutions, a significant (99% confidence level) difference between the means for all students at Miami University compared to other public universities was found in the following areas:

- Miami students appear to interact more with faculty both during office hours and outside of class while interacting less with teaching assistants. Our students also appear to interact more with close friends both at Miami and other institutions.
- Our students are more satisfied with classroom, library, health, recreational, and student housing facilities and services; they are less satisfied with academic advising.
- Miami students felt more successful getting to know faculty and developing close friendships with other students.
- Our students rate themselves higher on writing ability and lower on artistic ability and computer skills.
- Miami students appear to drink more and feel overwhelmed by all they had to do while they socialize less with someone of another race/ethnic group.
- Our students found it less important to make a theoretical contribution to science.
- Miami students were more likely to feel lonely or homesick and worry more about meeting new people.
- Fewer Miami students felt the need to break away from family to succeed, that family responsibilities interfered with schoolwork, felt unsafe on campus, or were bored in class.
- Miami students were more likely to have courses that included group discussions and projects, student selected topics, presentations as well as evaluations of each other's work, research projects, multiple drafts of written work, weekly essay assignments, and field experience.
- Fewer Miami students received tutoring, turned in course assignments late, came to class late or skipped class, discussed course content outside of class.
- More of our students participate in intramural sports and also had difficulty getting along with roommates.
- Compared to when they entered, Miami students did not describe themselves as stronger in library or research skills, analytical and problem-solving skills, knowledge of a particular discipline, knowledge of people from different races/cultures, or the ability to work as part of a team.

- Fewer Miami students were concerned about financing their education.
- Miami students spend more time attending classes/labs, studying/homework, socializing with friends, exercising, partying, communicating via e-mail, IM, etc.; participating in student clubs/groups; they spend less time working off campus, commuting, performing household/childcare duties, and surfing the internet.
- Our students seem to be more satisfied with the amount of contact with faculty, the overall quality of instruction, and their overall college experience.

### **Relevant Findings**

On the first 21 questions asked of all participating institutions, a significant (99% confidence level) difference between the means for women and men at Miami University was found, wherein more men than women:

- Interacted with other college personnel and teaching assistants during office hours and felt successful at getting to know faculty.
- Rated themselves more highly in academic, leadership, mathematical, and public speaking abilities, computer skills, emotional and physical health, self-confidence and self-understanding.
- Found it important to make a theoretical contribution to science.
- Felt they needed to break away from family to succeed in college and that job responsibilities interfered with schoolwork.
- Took courses that included field experience or internship and service learning.
- Turned in course assignments late, came late to or skipped class, and worked with a professor on a research project.
- Participated in intramural sports and also sought personal counselling.
- Describe improvements in the following areas-- analytical and problem-solving skills, library/research skills, and understanding of national and global issues.
- Spend time exercising or sports, partying, working for pay off campus, watching TV, household duties, reading for pleasure, commuting, playing video/computer games, and surfing the Internet.
- Were satisfied with the relevance of coursework to everyday life.

A significant (99% confidence level) difference between the means for women and men at Miami University was found wherein more women than men:

- Interacted with friends and family.
- Were satisfied with the recreational facilities.
- Since entering college, attended a religious service and discussed religion. Felt overwhelmed by all they had to do; and felt depressed.
- Found it important to help others who are in difficulty and integrate spirituality into their life.
- Felt lonely or homesick, unsafe of Miami's campus, worried about meeting new people as well as their health; were intimidated by their professors, and thought their courses inspired them to think in new ways;
- Took courses that included group discussions, student presentations/ performances, formal lectures, and multiple drafts of written work.

- Discussed course content with students outside of class, studied with other students, and used the Internet for research or homework.
- Spend time attending classes/labs, studying/homework, surfing the Internet, and communicating via e-mail, IM, etc.
- Have a higher GPA.
- Were satisfied with the overall college experience.

On the 21 questions specific to Miami, a significant (99% confidence level) difference between the means for women and men at Miami University was found, wherein more men than women:

- Always to sometimes ask their parent's opinion, but made their own decisions.
- Rated their freshmen courses as difficult.
- Agreed that their courses required a significant amount of independent thinking and intellectual initiative.
- Found the Miami Plan requirements somewhat clear.
- Participated in MU AFTER DARK 1-2 times.
- Have been significantly affected by an incidence of sexual assault at least once

On the 21 questions specific to Miami, a significant (99% confidence level) difference between the means for women and men at Miami University was found, wherein more women than men:

- Found Miami somewhat stricter than most schools in enforcing rules regarding alcohol.
- Occasionally worried about their weight and how to control it.

## **2001 College Student Survey**

Prepared by Michael Cubberley

### **Instrument Introduction**

The Higher Education Research Institute identifies the College Student Survey as:

The CSS helps institutions respond to the needs of assessment and accountability by providing information on a broad range of student outcomes. In addition, the CSS can be used with the CIRP Freshman Survey to study student growth and change. The CSS provides valuable feedback on your students' academic and campus life experiences-information that can be used for student assessment activities, accreditation and self-study reports, campus planning, and policy analysis. ... The CSS was initiated in 1993 to permit individual campuses to conduct follow-up studies of their students. At this point, close to 800 institutions and 270,000 students have participated in the CSS (Unknown, n.d.).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *College Student Survey: Program Overview* (n.d.). Retrieved March 26, 2003, from

## **Participation Overview**

In the 2001 survey, 386 students participated. In this pool, 27.7% self identified as male, and 72.3 percent self identified as female. In comparison to “Public Universities” and “All 4+ Year Institutes,” Miami’s sample included a higher percentage of female respondents by 4.5% over public institutions and 8.9% over all 4+ year institutions represented. Participation on individual questions reached as low as 111 respondents on questions that dealt with community service/service learning.

## **Global Overview**

The data that is presented in this survey paints a portrait of the student body that illuminates some notable similarities and differences between Miami and other institutions of higher education in the United States. This instrument seems to suggest that students are academically focused and believe Miami is academically rigorous and challenging. Approximately 80% of the respondents reported spending at least 6 hours a week or more “studying.” This perception is countered by responses to questions addressing significant levels of participation in social and recreational activities. This is clearly represented in the figures that show that 46% of respondents claim spending a minimum of 6 hours a week “partying” in contrast to 22% at public institutions and 28.9% in all 4+ year institutions surveyed. Over half of the respondents gave Miami a “grade” of “B” or higher on the quality of their in-class experiences as well as the quality of their out-of-class experiences.

This academic focus is also illustrated in that only 15.5% of Miami respondents do not plan on continuing their education after the attainment of a bachelor’s degree as opposed to 33.7% at public institutions and 23.1% at all 4+ year institutions. In general, Miami seems in line or superior to its counterparts in areas traditionally viewed as positive and consistent or below in areas often deemed negative except in the cases of partying and alcohol usage. From these results, it is indicated that the respondents balance a heavy academic load (50.5% reporting 16-20 hours in classes or labs versus 32% at public institutions and 21.2% at all 4+) with significant levels of socialization and social activities.

## **Specific Relevant Findings**

One finding that seems relevant if not interesting in the results of this survey is the underutilization of technologies that represent a significant aspect of respondents’ time at Miami. Two questions illustrate this clearly in that 63.8% of students (82.9% of men, and 56.5% of women) reported daily non-academic Internet usage and 88.1% their own computer. The underutilization is represented in the numbers that show that more than half have never participated in an e-mail or online discussion and 38.3% only utilize the Internet 2-3 times a week for academic purposes. These findings suggest that the use of the Internet and other technologies could be increased to address students academic and co-curricular needs and as another avenue for student contact.

Another finding which seems relevant to Student Affairs on this campus is only 31.4% of respondents reported socializing with someone of another racial/ethnic group over the course of the last year. Though this question does not specifically ask about contact or significant exposure to other racial/ethnic groups, it does seem to suggest that Miami is lagging behind other surveyed schools in this area by as much as 18% of respondents. More information on this area could lead to some important insights in to social, cultural, and organizational conditions that may be affecting these numbers.

Finally, alcohol usage numbers, though not wholly surprising, represent another area of concern for Student Affairs at Miami. Respondents reported drinking as an activity 14% more often than the comparison groups. Again this question is too vague to determine the severity of alcohol usage or other associated problems but this question does seem to indicate that this is an area that should be further investigated at this university.

**Appendix B**  
**First-Year Enrichment Seminar Committee**  
**April 23, 2003**

**Subcommittee Members:** Kip Alishio, Rick Browne, Tracy Davis, Gail Della Piana, Linda Dixon, Kathleen Knight-Abowitz, Kenneth Linsley, Denny Roberts (chair), Lisa Santucci, Elizabeth Stanley, Ben Vodila

**Enhancing the intellectual climate at Miami University**

The First in 2009 vision is raising the expectations for Miami University students, faculty, and staff. Acquiring and retaining a more highly qualified student body and providing a richer intellectual and cultural life for Miami students are two of the major emphases of the First in 2009 vision. The First-Year Experience Committee recognized during its work over the 2001-2002 academic year that one of the most critical places to start is with first-year students. Establishing high expectations and engaging students deeply during their first year will set a precedent of deeper learning that will shape the rest of their experiences while at the University. Consistent with this purpose, Miami's Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Ronald Crutcher, set a goal that by fall of 2004 all first-year students will have at least one small and engaged learning experience.

The First-Year Enrichment Seminar Committee met throughout the spring semester of 2003 to investigate how a combination of small courses, offered primarily to first-year students, could be refined and/or expanded to help Miami achieve its goals. These courses, taught in residence halls through the Theme Learning Communities or courses like EDL100 and EDL110, have been instrumental in providing academic challenge and enrichment for a number of years. Statements about these courses by students who have taken them include:

Through service learning and peer comments I have increased my wisdom in controversial subjects and also about my feelings on these subjects.

I have become more careful about choosing my extracurricular activities and I've been happy with the results.

The class focused on what students wanted to know and what tools and skills they needed to succeed in other classes.

*This class was very beneficial in assisting me in narrowing my options for a major/career. It also helped me to find out how I can use tools/resources here at Miami to help me make decisions for my future.*

The following are descriptions of these courses.

**Enrichment Seminars**

Enrichment seminars provide meaningful bridges between student learning inside and outside of the academic classroom. These courses provide students with the guidance and structure to: learn about the University and the transitions they face in entering college; connect their academic study with residence hall programs, by participating in activities and classes focused on a particular theme; and gain the knowledge and analytical abilities to choose a major and career path for themselves. These courses enhance the intellectual vitality of Miami University and have the ability to further enrich student learning. These courses utilize experiential forms of learning to help students achieve autonomy and self-reliance; therefore, their learning goals intersect with the goals of the Choice Matters initiative of the first year experience program.

While these courses primarily target first-year students, and use developmentally-appropriate pedagogy for that population, some sophomores also enroll. Upperclass students can be very helpful as either teaching assistants or as peer learners in these courses.

An addendum is attached that describes the University Libraries' on-line knowledge acquisition and management module. It is unclear if such a module should be included across a number of first-year courses or through some other method. It is evident that technology-assisted learning is becoming a larger part of every student's experience and Miami will have to devise appropriate methods to accommodate this growing phenomenon.

### **EDL100 – Career Development and the College Student**

EDL 100 is designed primarily for students who have yet to identify a major or career path. The course leads students systematically through the career exploration process, and helps students to develop skills related to career exploration. Skills gained from the course are related to learning about and reflecting upon themselves in a more systematic way (in particular their skills, interests, values, and personality), and researching career and educational opportunities that fit with their unique characteristics. These skills will help them as they continue to engage in career exploration at Miami and beyond. The course also serves to assist students in making initial decisions regarding both academic and career goals, and to improve their critical thinking skills.

### **EDL110 – The University and the Student**

EDL 110 is an introductory seminar designed to assist first-year students in understanding the developmental patterns that they will face during their undergraduate career. It will help students explore the world of higher education and clarify why they are in college. It will help students establish realistic goals for their collegiate experience, learn about resources available to them at Miami University, and assist them in their cognitive and skill development. It will help them identify with Miami and begin to explore who they are and how they fit in the University environment.

### **Theme Learning Community Courses**

The residence halls at Miami have responded to the call for an enhanced intellectual climate by creating a distinct emphasis within each of the halls. The Living Learning Communities integrate curricular and co-curricular experiences that complement and extend classroom learning. The Living Learning Communities create a seamless learning environment by incorporating special interests into programmatic efforts by administrators, faculty, staff and students. Since the students share at least one common interest, a closeness and sense of community naturally develops. A variety of Theme Learning Communities exist at Miami with approximately sixty percent of first-year students placed in one in the fall of 2002.

### **Conclusions and Action Steps:**

- FY Enrichment seminars provide an important means to achieve the goals of enriching the experiences of first-year students. They have both expanded and improved over the years but their potential is limited by insufficient collaborative relationships among academic and student affairs offices.
- While the FY Enrichment seminars have made important strides, the support for curriculum development and instructor pedagogy training is limited.

- In order to garner the resources needed to move forward, there needs to be a greater awareness of the Enrichment seminars and Theme Learning Communities. This will lead to more support, including additional faculty as instructors and faculty taking more responsibility for the content of the courses.
- EDL100 – The potential expansion of EDL100 to meet more students’ needs will require an enhanced relationship with the Educational Leadership Department and the School of Education and Allied Professions will need to advocate for its continuance. The new resources allotted to expand EDL100 should be evaluated in order to determine if they are appropriate and adequate.
- EDL110 – The Learning Assistance Center presently manages the targeted enrollment sections of EDL110. If the number of sections is expanded for broader student enrollment, another office will need to be identified to oversee the additional sections and other staff will need to be identified to teach them.
- EDL100 and EDL110 – Both of these courses are taught at the Hamilton and Middletown Regional campuses. As changes are made to the Oxford campus sections, there could be implications for the Regional versions of these courses.
- The expansion of the Enrichment seminars and Theme Learning Community courses will eventually raise questions about the number of credits and grading options offered among them. While uniformity is not likely to be necessary, some greater consistency may be useful.
- Whether new or continuing, all of the Enrichment seminars should provide:
  - Opportunity for critical thinking
  - Opportunity for personal reflection
  - Small class size for in-depth participation
  - Engagement in intellectual work in a small-group setting
- The *Pedagogical Guidelines* of FY Seminars should also be incorporated:
  - Unique ways of fulfilling the Miami Plan principles (critical thinking, understanding contexts, engaging with other learners, reflecting and acting)
  - Assignments involving analysis, application, inquiry, comparison, synthesis and research
  - Opportunity to strengthen communication skills (e.g., writing, public speaking, information technology, field experiences)
  - Hands-on, interactive activities (e.g., lively discussions, debates, simulations, small group work, inquiry-based labs, case studies)
  - Continual reflection on learning and opportunities for regular feedback and assessment of learning
- Choice Matters considerations should be infused in a variety of ways.
- The above Enrichment and Theme Learning Community seminars are largely the result of Student Affairs’ initiatives over time and with little additional support. To expand or enhance them, resources must be provided in the form of:
  - In general:
    - Establish a reward or incentive system for graduate students, faculty and student affairs professionals who teach these courses. For example, the effects on tenure, promotion, and/or release time should be addressed.
    - Some form of compensation for instructors will need to be provided if they are to be sustained over time. Options include granting a teaching stipend or providing professional development resources.
  - For Theme Learning Communities:
    - Miami Plan credit should be offered for appropriate Living Learning Community courses.
    - The student registration system for these courses must be streamlined and be more manageable.
    - More funding for programming outside of class meetings is needed.

**Continuing considerations:**

- How can the best instructors for FY Enrichment and TLC courses be identified and what pedagogy training and support do they need?
- How can/should students be guided in their choice among FY Enrichment, Theme Learning Communities, or FY Seminars? Residence Hall First-Year Advisors and Divisional advising offices must be prepared to assist in this process.
- Continue to monitor incoming student demographics and experiences in order to provide the topics and learning experiences necessary for them to be successful.

**Addendum**  
**University Libraries On-line Module**

The University Libraries staff initiated a pilot of an on-line module to help students learn critical knowledge acquisition and management skills. This online module was supported by a grant from the Ohio Board of Regents. When completed, the module will provide an introduction to college-level research. The Library staff intentionally developed this as an on-line resource that can be supported by librarians who staff the on-line, interactive reference service. By approaching learning this way, students can complete the course at their convenience.

The information search skills that students acquire in this course are vital for students as they make the transition from small secondary schools and public libraries to the larger and more complex Miami University libraries. The skills addressed in the pilot include mastering competencies to:

- Navigate a multi-library system that houses 2.6 million books and 14,000 journals.
- Identify and request materials in a consortial environment that includes 10 million books at libraries at more than 70 Ohio colleges and universities.
- Become familiar with more than 150 electronic research databases, image collections, and on-line book providers to which the Miami University Libraries subscribe.
- Revise search strategies to effectively pinpoint the most relevant pieces of information, rather than simply accepting the first results uncritically.
- Critically analyze the research value of sources ranging from scholarly research databases (e.g., Lexis-Nexis), advocacy-related web sites, and cyberjunk.
- Conduct all stages of research at a pace that is often more accelerated than at the K-12 level.

The Library staff believes that the above competencies must be nurtured in all students. As technological access to information becomes a more prevalent part of everyone's life, mastery of these processes will become more and more critical and may justify their inclusion across a variety of curricula or in a stand-alone course sometime in the future.

## Appendix C

### First-Year Seminar Proposal

**Subcommittee Members:** Mary Jane Berman, Steven DeLue, Yildirim Dilek, Carolyn Haynes (chair), Cindy Lewiecki-Wilson, Kristin McCartney

#### I. Rationale

Miami boasts an impressive array of first-year courses and initiatives, including a summer reading program, an expanding honors program, theme learning communities as well as many involvement opportunities in student organizations. Yet, in recent years, some concern has been raised that first-year students are not being challenged academically as much as possible. In a recent study on student expectations about learning, Karen and Karl Schilling wrote that “At Miami University, . . . we have found that most incoming students report expecting to spend thirty to forty hours a week in academic pursuits” (p. 4). Yet, by spring of their first year, “a thirty-hour-per-week schedule was modal, with decreases in the number of students experiencing a forty-hour week and increases in the number of students reporting that they worked twenty or fewer hours per week on academic work” (p. 8). In addition, in a recent survey conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP, 2002), only 8% of Miami first-year students claimed that their research and library skills had significantly improved, and less than 10% believed that their critical thinking skills and analytical skills had become “much stronger.” Less than 20% felt that their knowledge of a particular discipline or field was stronger. Possible reasons for these problems might be that most Miami Plan Foundation courses are large (containing more than 40 students on average), focus heavily on acquisition of content, and are increasingly taught by non-tenure-track faculty.

In order to improve this situation, Provost Crutcher recently set the goal for all first-year students to have the opportunity to enroll in one small class or learning experience beyond the ENG 111/112 “College Composition” course. This goal is in keeping with the larger goals of President James Garland’s “First in 2009” vision which call for faculty to develop a curriculum for the twenty-first century and to strengthen academic standards and enrich campus intellectual and cultural life.

#### II. Benefits for Students

Small class and interactive learning experiences are beneficial for students in unique ways. Small classrooms can be more readily turned into learning communities than larger lecture-based and content-driven courses. Students in a learning community learn to work with each other and with faculty members to make use of the tools of a particular discipline or interdisciplinary environment to address important questions. In this process, students develop the skills that enhance liberal education principles (critical thinking, engaging with other learners, understanding contexts, and reflecting and acting). An extensive national survey of pre/post test data for 62 introductory physics courses enrolling 6542 students at universities, colleges and high schools across the country including Harvard (Hake 1998) strongly suggests that “interactive-engagement methods” promotes conceptual understanding and problem-solving ability well beyond that achieved by traditional, lecture-and exam-based methods of teaching.

“Interactive engagement” methods are those used typically in small classroom settings and include inquiry-based, hands-on activities which yield immediate feedback through discussion with peers and instructor. In addition, professional higher education organizations have identified best practices in education that fit the small classroom setting. For example, in its recent *Greater Expectations National Panel Report*, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) called for higher educational institutions to engage in the following strategies to facilitate intentional learning: “writing assignments of multiple kinds for many purposes; required and critiqued oral presentations; problem-based learning; undergraduate research; inquiry-based science labs; planned and supervised experiences in teamwork, both in class and in off-campus settings; student team-designed lab experiments; service

learning; and personal writing” (33). High quality, interactive seminar-style classes make these goals more likely to be realized. Of course, existing resources do not allow for all first-year students’ classes to be small. However, ensuring that all first-year students would have the opportunity to enroll in one small learning experience or course beyond the College Composition course would represent a major step in increasing the level of their intellectual challenge.

### III. Benefits for Faculty

Research on faculty development (Alstete; Bland and Berquist) suggests that mid-career and senior faculty particularly benefit from new pedagogical challenges, and might enjoy the opportunity to work in smaller settings with students. Because the topic of the small classes often centers on faculty member’s particular intellectual passion, these seminars can help to boost faculty members’ scholarly research. In addition, through the planning sessions, faculty will have the opportunity to communicate disciplinary interests with others and to critically evaluate the benefits and limitations of their own disciplines.

### IV. Existing Small Class Experiences for First-Year Miami Students

Although the Provost’s goal of ensuring one small class learning experience to all first-year students (in addition to ENG 111/112) is ambitious, fortunately, Miami already boasts an impressive array of small class experiences for entering students. Below is a list of the current small-class experiences for first-year students as well as an estimated figure for the number of students served each year. All of these courses meet in sections with 25 or fewer students. *However, they are not all the same in terms of approach or purpose.*

| Course   | Division   | Enrollment |
|--|--|------------|
| Honors courses (70 lower-division courses)                 | Honors, All Divisions  | 250        |
| Western courses (8 100-level courses)                      | School of Interdisciplinary Studies, Department of Architecture, Int. Design | 150        |
| ARC 101/102  | ARC  | 60         |
| ART 111, 121, 122, 171                                     | ART  | 100        |
| THE 101  | THE  | 75         |
| EDL 100 “Career Development for College Students”          | Student Affairs  | 250        |
| EDT 110 “College Study Skills”                             | Student Affairs  | 150        |
| EDL 110 “The University and the Student”                   | Student Affairs  | 150        |
| ART 182 “Experience the Arts”                              | ORL, Fine Arts   | 100        |
| FRE 110 “French Cultural Studies”                          | ORL and FRE  | 10         |
| GER 141 “Modern German Film”                               | ORL, GREAL   | 15         |
| PHS 116 “Personal Wellness”                                | ORL, PHS   | 120        |
| ITS 101 “Global Awareness”                                 | ORL, ITS   | 75         |
| EDL 306 “Nature of Group Leadership”                       | ORL, Leadership faculty  | 95         |
| IDS 151 “Diversity Seminar”                                | ORL, Center for American/World Cultures                                      | 90         |
| EDL 171 “Learning Through Service”                         | ORL, Stud Affairs  | 100        |
| CSA 101.T “Exploring Technology”                           | ORL, School of Engineering/App Science                                       | 50         |
| WMS 130 “Women, Math, Science & Engineering”               | ORL, Math, Science, Engineering depts.                                       | 50         |
| APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN THESE COURSES |  | 2,400      |

Given that Miami admits approximately 3000 to 3,500 first-year students each year, the table above reveals that approximately two-thirds of our first-year students currently have the opportunity to enroll in small class experiences. In order to ensure that all first-year students have the opportunity to enjoy a small class experience, Miami would need to offer approximately 50 additional first-year seminars or other small class experiences. Because not all of the courses in the above list are focused rigorously on academic learning, we seek to increase the numbers of small class experiences that meet the goals of the Miami Plan.

## **V. Proposal for First-Year Seminar Initiative**

To enhance the numbers and types of existing small class experiences for first-year students, we propose an important initiative: the creation of discipline-based and interdisciplinary first-year seminars that meet Miami Plan Foundation requirements. Ten seminars will be offered in AY2004-2005 on the Oxford campus, 15 in 2005-2006, and 20 in 2006-2007. The amount of seminars will increase steadily as human and financial resources allow. Efforts will also be made to increase other small class experiences, such as Theme Learning Communities and college adjustment courses.

### **A. Goals and Description**

The general goals of the first-year seminar are to: [1] lead to students' intellectual, creative and ethical engagement with ideas; [2] strengthen the relationship between research and learning of students and faculty; [3] promote active approaches to student learning; [4] encourage students to use writing and other forms of communication and creative expression to construct knowledge; and [5] help students relate specialized academic knowledge with current and enduring ethical, social and cultural debates and issues. The FYE Committee encourages interdisciplinary, team-taught, inquiry-based, or experientially-based courses. *Individual faculty, departments, programs, centers or entire divisions are encouraged to propose first-year seminars.* Seminars from all disciplines and interdisciplines are sought.

First-Year Seminars will have no more than 20 students, be a minimum of three credit hours, and count toward the Miami Plan Foundation requirements. Ideally, these seminars will focus on an intellectual theme, problem or issue, be unlike any other courses currently taught, and be based on the passion and expertise of the faculty members. First-year seminars are open to all students, except for University Honors Program and School of Interdisciplinary Studies students (who already have access to first-year seminars within their programs of study).

First-Year Seminar faculty will be expected to teach the seminar at least twice over the span of three years. Every effort will be made to accommodate faculty members' and departments' scheduling needs. First-year seminars are enrollment-contingent with a minimum of 12 students required and 20 students required for team-taught seminars. All first-year seminars will be evaluated and student learning assessed.

### **B. Pedagogical Guidelines**

First-year seminars should focus on a topic of lively and engaging interest for first-year students and encourage the following:

- Unique ways of fulfilling the Miami Plan principles (critical thinking, understanding contexts, engaging with other learners, reflecting and acting)
- Assignments involving analysis, application, inquiry, comparison, synthesis and research
- Opportunity to strengthen communication skills (e.g., writing, public speaking, information technology, field experiences)
- Hands-on, interactive activities (e.g., lively discussions, debates, simulations, small group work, inquiry-based labs, case studies)

- Continual reflection on learning and opportunities for regular feedback and assessment of learning

### **C. Possible Models**

Below is a list of descriptions for first-year seminars from a variety of institutions.

#### Discipline-Specific Seminars

*Mathematics in Historical Context* (Mt. Holyoke)

(Writing-intensive) The course begins with prehistory: Egyptian geometry and Pythagorean geometry and arithmetic; next the Alexandrian period, featuring Archimedes, Euclid, and Ptolemy, where classical geometry is brought to a culmination and the beginnings of calculus are seen. After a short consideration of Arab mathematics, we enter the Renaissance and look at its two great accomplishments: algebra and analytic geometry. Then we examine the Enlightenment and the development of Calculus by Newton, Leibniz, and Euler. Finally, we enter briefly into the modern era with the discovery (invention?) of set theory toward the end of the nineteenth century.

#### Discovery- or Problem-Based Seminars

*Baseball's Darkside: Can the "Black Sox" Scandal of 1919 Be Repeated?* (Loras College)

Eight Chicago White Sox players succumbed to the "Black Sox" scandal of 1919. Bribed to throw the World Series, they were found innocent in a court of law but were banned from baseball forever. Did corruption exist in baseball prior to this incident? Why was this scandal so significant? Are the causes of illegal gambling in sports still prevalent today? Issues to be explored involve salaries, fringe benefits, alcoholism, drugs, racism, free agency, media influence, commercialism, and American economics. Sports originally were championed for their ability to build character and discipline. Is it still possible to attain ethical values in sports today?

*The Mediterranean* (Miami University)

Integrating facts, observations, and data from the disciplines of geology, geography, history, anthropology and political science, this course examples the geological, landscape and human evolution of the Mediterranean region. The course will focus on the themes of geological processes, tectonic evolution, volcanism, rivers and society, global changes and human responses in history. The hallmark of the course is a week-long field trip to Naples, Italy to investigate the ancient history of Mt. Vesuvius, Campi Flegrei, and the ancient cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Each student will investigate a specific question through first-hand observation, library research and data collection.

*Cheeseburger in Paradise* (College of Wooster)

Food is one of the essential components of human life; some eat to live and other live to eat. We live in a time of global malnutrition, due to either feast or famine. As America has adopted the low fat diet, obesity has increased. How are society's views and understanding of nutrition changing? Who defines the food pyramid? Should we be eating diets that are low fat, low carbohydrate, vegetarian? How are different groups of people impacted by changes in nutritional guidelines? How does nutrition in America compare to that in other industrialized and developing nations? These questions represent issues that will be explored through readings in scholarly works, popular literature and the World Wide Web.

#### Multicultural and Global Seminars

*Whiteness and the Construction of Identity* (Mt. Holyoke)

(Writing-intensive) In this course, we will conduct a group inquiry of whiteness in contemporary U.S. culture and how it influences our individual identities. We will explore the social and historical contexts which constructed whiteness and examine how whiteness is enacted in daily life. Frameworks of racial identity development, privilege, dominance, and antiracism will reveal the power of whiteness while enabling us to imagine a whiteness that could enhance social justice. Satisfies multicultural requirement; 4 credits

#### Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary Seminars

*Dialogues Among Disciplines*

Throughout history Mathematics and Physics have always had a close and dynamic relationship. This course explores and highlights this connection through an inter-disciplinary study of both subjects. Topics will include: Kepler and Tycho Brahe, an example of mathematical and experimental analysis; Symmetries in physics and groups in mathematics; Poincare vs. Einstein and the discovery of Special Relativity; the race between Einstein and Hilbert; A theorem of Emmy Noether and the success of Particle Physics; and the emergence of String theory, its mathematics and promise. Course requires only knowledge of basic physics and calculus and will deal with some of the "most beautiful equations in all of science."

#### Popular Culture or Cultural Studies Seminars

*"Wannabe" Indians in American Culture* (College of Wooster)

This seminar will study the complex variety of Anglo-American 'wannabes,' i.e., whites who for entertainment, cultural and spiritual reasons want to co-opt, imitate or be adopted into Native American culture and religion. Students will research the wide range of such examples over the span of several centuries (e.g., captivity narratives, boy and girl scouts, missionary diaries, New Age practitioners, and white "medicine men and women." The seminar will example several Hollywood film explorations of this theme as well as the political and theoretical issues raised in Philip Deloria, Jr.'s *Playing Indian*.

*Rap & Violence: Are the Lyrics of Gangsta' Rappers Causing Today's Youth to Rape and Kill?*(Loras College)

Violence has always played a large part in the lives of rappers and their music. Eminem's lyrics glorify sexual violence and murder. Tupac Shakur was gunned down in a drive-by shooting in 1996. But over the years, violence has been linked to other controversial forms of music. For example, Columbine High School shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold listened to the often dark and violent music of Marilyn Manson. Students will investigate a number of issues. Can we blame the violent language and imagery in today's popular music, movies, and video games for the violent acts committed by our youth? Or should these forms of entertainment be defended as genuine works of art and harmless means of self-expression? Do these media simply reflect the violence already present in our society? This class will invite students to explore the connections, both real and perceived, between societal violence and violent content on the Internet, in the movies, and in music.

#### **D. Faculty Support and Development**

Faculty selected to teach first-year seminars will be invited to join several sharing sessions that will occur immediately prior to and during the semester that their seminar is taught. Faculty will work together collaboratively to share syllabi, pedagogical ideas, assignments and assessment strategies. The FYE Committee Coordinator will facilitate the planning session. Possible topics and activities for the sharing sessions are summarized below:

- Introductions and sharing of course topics
- First-year students' intellectual, interpersonal and intrapersonal development
- Active learning approaches for seminars
- Assignments
- Assessment of student learning
- Campus resources and support for first-year students

The instructor's home department will receive unrestricted compensation tentatively set at \$2400 per semester for the seminar. In team-taught courses, both departments will receive full compensation of \$2400, provided that no more than two faculty members are involved and each is fully involved in instruction in all phases of the course.

#### **VI. Co-Curricular Support: "Choice Matters"**

Because students learn both inside and outside the classroom, efforts must be made to reinforce the intellectual challenge of the First-Year Seminar in out-of-class experiences. This goal of purposeful and enhanced learning is reinforced in the "Choice Matters" co-curricular initiative which was begun in Summer 2002. Specific aspects of the "Choice Matters" Co-Curricular initiative include:

### Summer Orientation Messages

The Summer Orientation staff embraces the “Choice Matters” theme fully through a variety of strategies. Staff integrate the topic of choices in everything from the Orientation welcome to the small group discussions with student leaders.

### Mega Fair

Instead of holding many different fairs that invite students to join student organizations (fraternities, clubs, associations), Miami now offers one Mega Fair where all student organizations come together to showcase their programs and recruit new members. Special advising from Residence Hall staff is given to students ahead of time urging them to be purposeful and selective in their choices of organizations so that their student life activities will not impede, but instead enhance, curricular learning. Including volunteer and student involvement opportunities in one event reinforces the message of Miami being a seamless learning environment.

### Learning Goals Worksheet

First-Year Advisors use a special “Learning Goals Worksheet” in their advising sessions with students. This worksheet encourages new students to think carefully about how to use their time and resources in appropriate and purposeful ways and how to deepen their learning while at Miami. Last year, this worksheet met with great success, and many FYAs used them effectively. Consideration is underway to include the “Learning Goals Worksheet” in some modified form in the various applications for student leadership roles and programs. The Division of Student Affairs is exploring the possibility of using the “Learning Goals Worksheet” as a way of helping student employees look at the balance of their time and experiences and to look at employment as part of their education.

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**TENTATIVE TIMELINE FOR SELECTION, APPROVAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS**

**2003-2004**

| <b>Date</b>               | <b>Activity</b>   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Sept. 1, 2003             | Call for Proposals mailed to all faculty, chairs and deans  |
| Fall 2003                 | Each dean works with interested units and faculty to prepare proposals. Deans also recruit additional faculty, if necessary, to ensure the appropriate number of proposals. FYE Coordinator meets with Director of Liberal Education and Chair of CAS Curriculum Committee to identify streamlined ways of approving first-year seminar proposals. FYE Coordinator serves as a consultant to Deans and faculty proposers as needed. |
| November 2003             | Dean reviews proposals and selects 2-3 to be offered in 2004-2005. Deans notify FYE Coordinator of seminars to be offered.  |
| Dec. 15, 2003             | FYE Coordinator confers with chairs and the faculty proposer to secure appropriate approvals from LEC and CAS. Coordinator also finalizes schedule and arranges dates for the faculty sharing sessions.   |
| January, 2004             | FYE Co-Coordinator creates 2004-2005 schedule. Faculty proposers and chairs secure appropriate curricular approval (CAS, MPF, etc) for seminars.  |
| May 2004                  | First sharing session held to discuss preliminary syllabus, assignments and method for assessing student learning.  |
| Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 | Two additional sharing sessions held for faculty teaching in these semesters.   |
| May 2005                  | FYE Coordinator creates memo that assesses the overall success of the initiative.   |

## Appendix D

### Proposed Choice Matters Implementation Academic Year 2003-2004

**Subcommittee Members:** Hoyt Brown (chair), Dan Early, Jackie Elcik

The Choice Matters implementation for next academic year will build on experience gathered from this year's implementation. It will also incorporate two behavior change models to modify the implementation:

- Prochaska & Diclemente: Stages of Change Model (Prochaska, J., Diclemente, C. and Norcross, J. In search of how people change. American Psychologist, 1992; 47: 1102-1114.)
- Joan Garity: Garity's Behavior Change Model (Garity, J. Understanding and supporting healthy behavioral change: Focus on HIV. SIECUS Report, Oct/Nov 1991: 58-60.)

Review of Behavior Change Models:

- All focus on Raising Awareness/Significance to Self—why is this relevant to student?
- Stress Motivation—why is behavior change necessary? Why should student change his/her decision making process?
- Provide Skill Building on Decision Making—Educate on how to make good decisions (process), focus on skill building, and practice (role playing).
- Maintain Targeted Behavior—support good decision making in long run.

The Choice Matters implementation plan should incorporate each of these areas and involve multiple players in this process, including First Year Advisors, RA's/CLA's, Other Student Affairs Units, etc.

First Year Advisors will be trained on presenting decision-making skills at their pre-semester training. Areas to focus on with decision-making skills may include academics: purposeful choices, engagement/active role in learning, & choosing academic challenges; personal safety: alcohol/drug use, sexual assault, & other similar topics; and campus involvement: student/Greek organizations, level of involvement, and wise management of time.

**Example:**

**Skill Building:**

- Identify decision making theoretical model/process upon which to base skill building.
- Prepare materials and training to educate First Year Advisors on Decision Making skills.
- First Year Advisors present skill-building workshops on Decision Making.
- Workshops are scheduled for sometime in first two weeks of fall semester prior to the Mega Fair.
- Unique workshops are then developed by each advisor according to perceived needs of students and individuality of the hall. Advisors may opt to work together to present workshops collaboratively for multiple halls—particularly for halls in the same LLC.
- Workshops should be interactive and involve active participation by students.

Utilize **Learning Goals Worksheet** to link efforts together. Components of the worksheet should address specific areas of the behavior change models AND those responsible for that part of the worksheet.

For example, RA/CLA's may be very effective in initiating conversations with students that relate to raising awareness/significance to self. As peers, they may be particularly effective at impressing upon students that there are important decisions to make. Advisors may focus on skill building and support.

Academic instructors could also focus on support for good behaviors as well as significance to self. Both could utilize the worksheet to personalize the approach for each student.

### **Choice Matters Training for Residence Life**

It is assumed that each staff member will have a solid grounding in the distinctive characteristics of Miami University:

- A Liberal Arts Heritage
  - Principles of Miami Plan for Liberal Education
    1. Engaging with other learners
    2. Understanding contexts
    3. Thinking critically
    4. Reflecting and acting
- A Public University with Many Qualities of a Liberal Arts College
  - “Miami is one of the eight original “Public Ivy”.**
- A Modern University Committed to Graduate Study and Research
  - Our focus is teaching undergraduates.
  - Miami effectively combines a wide range of academic programs with the personal attention ordinarily found only at smaller institutions.
- A Residential University Aiming at Total Student Development
  - Our residential programs involve students in life-enhancing activities that build leadership, character, and lifelong friendships.

*Questions for follow-up:*

- What do we mean when we say we promote a liberal education?
- What is the value of a liberal education?

Each staff member should be familiar with our plan for institutional improvement: *First in 2009*:

- Goal 1: A more highly qualified student body
- Goal 2: Greater academic support for faculty
- Goal 3: A stronger curriculum
- Goal 4: Richer intellectual/cultural life
- Goal 5: Greater diversity among students and faculty
- Goal 6: Enhanced facilities
- Goal 7: Stronger revenue base
- Goal 8: Improved ability to learn from other institutions

*Questions for follow-up:*

- What does it mean for the institution to say it wants to be “First in 2009”?
- Can we name one specific vision or idea to advance each goal?

Each staff member must understand the following with regard to “Choice Matters”:

### 1. Grounded in the broader context of institutional aspirations.

President Garland

- Set goal for MU to be premier university in its class by 2009.
- MU is losing high-ability and multicultural students to other institutions.
- Students are not perceived to be challenged intellectually and academically.
- Students are perceived to spend too much time on co-curricular, extra-curricular and social endeavors.

Provost's Charge

- To improve the holistic experience of Miami's first-year students, connecting existing programs and strengthening the interaction between Student and Academic Affairs.
- To place special emphasis on enhancing First in 2009 goals, specifically:
  - Goal #1—Attract a more highly qualified student body
  - Goal #2—Provide strategic support for faculty working with first-year students
  - Goal #3—Enhance the curriculum
  - Goal #5—Attract a greater diversity of students

### 2. What Is "Choice Matters"?

- *A unifying theme and vision that advances intellectual challenge by helping students, faculty and staff* make explicit and purposeful connections among parts of the curriculum and between the curriculum and other aspects of the collegiate experience.
- It endorses the idea that everyone should make purposeful decisions about their lives and reflect carefully on the relationships among those decisions.
- Is not a specific program but a way to approach our work with students.

*Questions for follow-up:*

- What is the distinction between a program and an approach?

### 3. Based on a definition of learning

- Learning "builds cumulatively and emerges through intensive engagements during a student's entire education, so links are important . . . throughout the college years, among courses, between general education and the major, between traditional in-class and experiential learning, between formal and informal settings" (AAC&U "Greater Expectations").

*Questions for follow-up:*

- What are the implications of such a definition for our work?

### 4. Assumes the following:

- Cognitive learning is enhanced when students are also provided purposeful opportunities to develop interpersonally and emotionally.
- Faculty, staff, administrators, and students must all communicate and work together to improve the entire first-year experience.
- A strong first year will provide strong foundation for the next four years at college.

### 5. Choice Matters: Five Broad Themes

- Set high expectations about learning for yourself and others
- Make purposeful decisions and focused use of time and resources
- Take risks to promote learning in a diverse and complicated world
- Work with others to deepen your understanding of self
- Integrate and reflect critically on knowledge gained from diverse experiences

#### *Questions for follow-up:*

In what ways can you set high expectations for the students you work with?

Are you modeling purposeful use of your time and resources?

Do you create opportunities to reflect?

### 6. Questions for ourselves:

- What are the choices that matter in your life?
  - This should be a place where staff can reflect individually and then collectively reflect on the choices that have made a difference in their life.
- What are the choices that matter in a student's mind?
- What are the choices that a student must make in order to achieve a liberal education? To "get a job upon graduation". Are the choices different?
- How might we as an Office help students to understand what really matters about a choice?
- Am I sending messages to students that reinforce academic learning and encourage them to view themselves as scholars?
- How can I help students to develop cognitively, emotionally and interpersonally?
- How can I help students to see links between their in- and out-of-class experiences?
- Have I taken the time to get to know faculty and to create rich co-curricular experiences that deepen course-based learning?
- Am I promoting the image of Miami as an intellectual and academic site of learning?

### 7. Questions for students:

- Why did I come to college?
- Am I devoting enough time to my studies?
- Am I encouraging my peers to deepen their academic learning?
- What do I value or stand for?
- What one or two out-of-class experiences can enhance my personal goals?
- How can I meet and relate to others who have differing views from my own?
- How do my courses and my out-of-class experiences relate to one another?

**Our goal as residence life staff should be to assist students in creating their own education.**

- What does this mean?
- What are the implications of such a statement? For the student? For us as professionals?
- How can we operationalize this statement?