FC14 in Motion, Issue 2

Office of Marketing and Communications

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Newsletter Documenting GSU’s Exciting 2014 Initiatives

By President Elaine P. Maimon

In Motion, the FC14 newsletter, is designed to document Renaissance 2014 — GSU’s planning for freshmen and for our first residence facility. While these new campus initiatives provide the focus, the entire campus has been engaged in transformative thinking about GSU as a whole. We can feel the positive momentum everywhere.

We are drawing on our founding principle of innovation to create a model twenty-first century university. Renaissance means rebirth, and we are all participating in the rebirth of our innovative tradition.

The General Education Task Force, under the leadership of Professor Ann Vendrely, decided to take general education planning beyond the freshman class. In Motion will bring you up to date on their work on comprehensive general education planning. Civic engagement, global citizenship, and sustainability will connect freshman courses, provide themes for residential areas in Prairie Place, and inform campus activities in 2014 and beyond.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the campus for this Renaissance effort. Offices all around the university, from the Library to the Registrar’s Office, are planning for our emergence as a comprehensive public university. The Lower Division Steering Committee, under the leadership of Dean Reinhold Hill, is overseeing this work, making sure that all the pieces fit.

I am so proud of this university. Working together, we have undertaken some major initiatives over the last few years: the E&F renovations, the computer conversion, and now we are bringing it all together in FC14. We are already gaining national attention for our first-year program and for our Dual Degree Program (both/and not either/or!).

The FC14 newsletter is an important way to keep everyone up to date on the difference we are making on campus and on higher education. You won’t want to miss a single issue. GSU is making history, and we can read about it first in the FC14 newsletter.

Welcome to the Second Edition of In Motion - the FC14 Newsletter

Thank you for the words of encouragement and suggestions after the first edition of In Motion. Your questions and suggestions were the basis for the development of this month’s edition.

We need your continued input into the evolution of this newsletter by submitting ideas for future articles, questions for the FAQ’s, or your ideas for the new feature “Alphabet Soup.”

Send an e-mail message to engage@govst.edu with your questions and article ideas. Every effort will be made to get your ideas into print.
First Year Seminars and Peer Mentors: A Powerful Pair for Student Success

By Aurelio Valente, Dean of Students

GSU’s lower division cohort-based curriculum builds on nearly four decades of research and best practices, and features our own version of a 21st Century First Year Seminar, an interdisciplinary humanities seminar that utilizes one of three themes -- Sustainability, Civic Engagement, or Global Citizenship, to explore the transferability of systems thinking in both academic and personal contexts. There will be a total of nine sections of the interdisciplinary seminar, three in each theme, and each enrolling no more than 30 students to ensure a high degree of collaborative learning and community building.

In addition to the innovative curriculum, Peer Mentors will be assigned to each First Year Seminar (FYS 1001) course section. Peer Mentors will be part of a team with the course instructor and the Cohort Advisor to support the personal and academic success of first year students. Peer Mentors will serve as positive role models to new students and assist them in making a successful transition to Governors State University. Since Peer Mentors will have an academic year appointment, they will continue their support for new student success in the spring semester, beyond their enrollment in FYS1001.

While new to GSU, first year seminars date as far back as the early 1930s. They were established as a national practice in the late 1960s by the University of South Carolina. Currently, approximately 85 percent of four-year institutions offer some form of a First Year Seminar. While they vary in format, some serve as college success courses and others focus on transition programming. Increasingly more focus on seminar topics of interest such “Is the American Dream a Myth?” by ensuring that senior faculty teach new students. There is one common denominator – all focus on supporting new student academic and personal success.

Peer Mentors will be upper-class students with a demonstrated record of campus and community engagement, who will be selected and trained to ensure a high quality first-year experience for FC14 students. In addition to their contributions to FYS 1001, Peer Mentors will coordinate co-curricular activities and programs designed to enrich the academic experience and serve as a liaison to a team of student success and academic enrichment professionals that includes representatives from, but not limited to, the Library, Writing Center, Academic Resource Center, and the Counseling Center.

At GSU, First Year Seminars and Peer Mentors, both designated as High Impact Practices, will be paired to deliver the highest quality first year experience and ensure success from the start!

High Impact Practices: Study Abroad/Global Experiences

By Randi S. Schneider, Director of Academic Engagement

Global education is among the many High Impact Practices that have a positive influence on student learning. Although global education comes in many forms, Study Abroad is one of most frequently discussed ways in which students can learn about other cultures. According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), many universities emphasize opportunities that help students “explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore ‘difficult differences’ such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.” Although In Motion will explore different topics associated with diversity and global learning, one of the questions submitted to engage@govst.edu last month was “Will students who participate in the first year cohorts be permitted to study abroad?” The answer is “Yes.” Traditionally, students study abroad during the junior year. By the junior year, students have fulfilled most of their core requirements, chosen their
major, and may have completed some coursework in their chosen major. Students who study abroad for a semester in the junior year can then return to GSU to take capstone courses and complete university requirements. The courses for the cohort-themed programs will conclude in time for students to participate in study abroad in the junior year. In fact, the General Education Task Force created all three cohort groups to complete the Illinois Articulation Initiative general education requirements by the end of the sophomore year.

Students will work in collaboration with International Services and their academic advisors to create an appropriate plan. With the right coaching, International Services can help students find affordable study abroad programs and even suggest targeted resources for students with financial needs. There will also be opportunities for short term study abroad experiences such as the College of Education’s trip to China that is in the planning stages for the fall semester. As our relationships with universities in China, Turkey, and other countries continue to expand, so too will opportunities grow for GSU students to experience the world.

In future editions of In Motion, our colleagues from the Office of International Services will share with us other High Impact Practices that involve global learning, including the extraordinary opportunity we will have to expand the number of international students and scholars here at GSU.

Hitting the Pavement to Recruit FC14

By Kristy Goodwin, Director of Recruitment and Outreach

Since April 2012, the Recruitment Department has been on the road representing Governors State University across the Chicagoland area. With two recruiters – Andrea Postiglione, High School Recruiting Specialist, and Stephanie Schaefer, Community College Recruiting Specialist – we have begun to hit the pavement and disperse to various areas within Illinois.

I have often been asked, “What is your strategy for recruitment?” My answer has simply been, “Visibility and Engagement.” Within 13 months, GSU has been represented at the largest high school fairs within the Midwest Region: The National Hispanic Conference - New Futuro, NY Times High School Fair, and the National Association of Collegiate Admission Counselors Fair (NACAC), with attendance by approximately 100,000 high school students. We have also presented at the High School Articulation Conference, which draws hundreds of high school counselors from across Illinois. We have started promoting GSU as a four-year, comprehensive university.

On April 26, we hosted our first High School Administration and Community Leaders Luncheon, where 45 representatives from regional schools as well as community leaders helped celebrate our FC14 kickoff campaign. We look forward to hosting our fall luncheon as a way to further engage the community.

The Recruitment Department has strategically streamlined our efforts for our FC14 population by targeting contiguous high schools around GSU. High schools are inquiring about small and large group tours and the Recruitment and Admission Department is beginning to create our first Open House this year to introduce high school students and their parents to GSU.

Here is what the Recruiting Specialist Andrea Postiglione had to say about her experiences on the road:
“We’re getting a lot of good feedback from the high school side of things. Most students like the fact that they will be the ‘first class.’ They like the cost effectiveness of our undergrad tuition and many are already considering getting their masters, or beyond, at GSU. They are excited for the new residence halls and the idea of being the first to create new organizations and teams.” There is much to do and much to look forward to in these upcoming months….Hold tight GSU, it’s going to be an exciting ride!

Alphabet Soup!

Dorm vs. Residence Hall (Student Residences)
By Betsy Joseph, Director of Auxiliary Services and University Housing

Welcome to the first installment of “Alphabet Soup,” where we will share insights about words that have started to become regular discussion items on campus.

It is quite common for the terms “dorm” and “residence hall” to be used interchangeably. However, there is a key difference between those two words. Historically, as Webster’s dictionary confirms, a “dorm” was a room for sleeping, and especially a large room containing numerous beds.

As we plan for the first on campus housing facility at GSU we will be working intentionally to connect the learning that is occurring in the classroom with co-curricular opportunities students will experience by living in Prairie Place. We will utilize the cohort themes of civic engagement, sustainability, and global citizenship as the framework for learning opportunities in Prairie Place whether a student is part of FC14 or a transfer student living in the residence halls.

Prairie Place will be a living-learning community that emphasizes people, growth and learning; a place where students’ lives will be enhanced through social interaction, educational opportunities, academic resources, and living in an inclusive community.

Contrast this to giving people a room to sleep in (a dorm). The difference between a “dorm” and a “residence hall” is a point of pride for GSU. The next time someone asks “Will GSU have dorms?” you can proudly proclaim “No, but we will have a residence hall that is conducive to student learning and provides a great place for students to thrive.”

In Motion Responds to Suggestions and Questions

The GSU community submitted questions and article suggestions for the second edition of In Motion. If you have questions or suggestions for future editions send them to Engage@govst.edu.

1. Will students be able to Study Abroad if they are a part of the cohort groups?
   See Randi Schneider’s article in this edition of In Motion.

2. Include an article about managing change and stress during times of transition.
   Dr. Barbara Gormley, Assistant Professor, Psychology, is writing an article on this topic for the June edition of In Motion.

3. Will students be able to finish their degree in four years?
   Yes, it is possible to finish a degree in four years. A typical bachelor’s degree requires 120 credit hours. Students who earn 15 credit hours each semester can reach the 120 credit hour goal in eight semesters, or four years. The General Education Task Force created the cohort groups to allow students to finish a degree in four years. All of the cohorts will complete the Illinois Articulation Initiative General Education requirements by the end of the sophomore year. Students face challenges as they progress
through a degree program that can affect degree progress. GSU is using recognized best practices regarding curriculum development and student support to be sure each student has the opportunity to create a successful plan. Some of the factors that impact the pace of degree attainment:

- Retaking coursework due to grade challenges
- Changing major
- Adding minors or a double major
- Earning fewer than 15 hours in a semester without compensating in summer school
- Stopping out of school to attend to other personal needs
- Not observing the guidance of Faculty and/or Academic Advisors as it relates to course selection (e.g. courses that are offered in specific sequence and in designated semesters)
- Student choice (supplemental learning opportunities that prolong time-on-task)

4. **Who will provide academic advising for new students?**

Students admitted for FC14 will have an assigned Academic Advisor who will stay with the student for both the first and second year of the cohort programs. The First Year Advisor(s) will work in Student Affairs. The advisor will work in collaboration with the Academic Advisors in each college to ensure students have the guidance needed to stay on track for all of the majors at GSU. About halfway through the sophomore year the student will be assisted with the transition to their new Academic Advisor appropriate to their selected major. The transition will be planned in collaboration with each college. More information on this topic will be discussed with the appropriate colleagues (e.g. The Board of Professional Advisors, Dean’s and Provost’s Council) to ensure plans are in place so that students successfully transition to GSU as well as to their selected major. In addition to the professional Academic Advisor working with first year students, there will also be a team of nine peer mentors who work with the Academic Advisors to provide leadership and support as students make a connection to GSU.

5. **Will GSU accept AP Credit?**

The Faculty Senate will make decisions and establish policy regarding Advanced Placement (AP) in fall 2013. Students may be awarded academic credit for satisfactory completion of AP tests. Score, course, and credit hour equivalencies have not yet been determined. It is important to keep in mind that students will be required to participate in cohort coursework during the freshmen and sophomore years and will not likely be permitted to “AP” or “CLEP” out of cohort courses.