

College 101 – Fostering First Year College Success

Each year, approximately 1.8 million U.S. first-quarter college freshmen encounter the greatest decision-making period of their young lives. Many of their choices will initiate life-long consequences with financial, emotional and physical (health-related) implications. Succeeding in the transition to college is both important and risky. The highest risks include a dramatic loss of earning capacity due to failing or dropping out, acquiring a sexually transmitted infection, alcohol poisoning, acquaintance rape, and others.

College 101 is designed around the premise that youth will achieve greater success and reduce negative consequences during their first quarter college experience if they increase their knowledge of the social scene and academic expectations of college. Behavioral data on youth subjects show improved decision-making and fewer negative consequences associated with prior encounters or foreknowledge of given situational “life” scenarios.

College 101 is based on the experience of current college upperclassmen. They can immediately identify the most challenging issues—social and academic—for incoming freshmen. The key themes that they identify have become the basis for the College 101 curriculum for college-bound high school seniors prior to their arrival on campus.



Interviewing College Students as part of the development process for College 101

While colleges and universities have “First Year Encounter” seminars and offer limited “life outside the classroom” information during freshman orientation, these come too late to provide processing time for risk decision-making. High School guidance counselors may discuss issues of college living with seniors as they prepare for college, but often the time crunch limits their input to the nuts-and-bolts of application.

The *College 101* approaches high school seniors on their terms utilizing direct quotes from contemporaries to add social scene and classroom stories with “future shock” value. It presents outlines and tips on note taking, study skills, and other academic procedures. *College 101* uses a “previewing technique” to help college bound youth prepare themselves for the social and academic choices they will have to make in the first quarter of college. This technique has a proven track record of reducing negative consequences of unprepared choices.

In 2006, fourteen College 101 pilot programs were conducted in five different states. Approximately 80-90% said they “would recommend it to a friend.” The College 101 curriculum was designed by Brian Raison of OSU Extension, Montgomery County, as a quick introduction to academic protocol and social scene changes that high school seniors would encounter upon arrival at any given university. A model was presented at state and national conferences; eighteen requests to pilot the program were received from across the U.S.

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