

ESFY Strategic Priorities 2009-2011

Liberal Arts * At-risk Students * Understanding and Advising Our Students

An ESFY Strategic Planning Group consisting of faculty and staff involved in the ESFY initiative has identified three top priorities for 2009-2011:

- Promote an understanding and appreciation of a liberal arts education.
- Support the implementation and further development of structures and programs that support at-risk students.
- Understand and advise our students in deeper and more effective ways.

These priorities have been identified as the result of an on-going process of study and discussion, drawing on the existing ESFY Mission and Goals statement and the Foundations of Excellence/ESFY Priorities developed as a result of our Foundations of Excellence self-study of the first year in the UW Colleges. At the ESFY Spring 2009 Conference and in several meetings among ESFY campus coordinators, we reviewed the goals and actions indicated on those documents. As part of our strategic planning process, these documents were studied together to identify areas of overlap as well as gaps. The three priorities that have been identified reflect the areas of greatest concern in our work Colleges-wide.

Because these goals have come out of the regular work being done in our departments and on our campuses, we hope that you will thoughtfully consider each of them and determine what you can do toward their achievement, both individually and collectively. Improving the experience for our first-year students is not just the job of a few people in each department or on each campus. It is for all of us to do.

Liberal Arts

- Coordinate curricular and co-curricular activities when possible.
- In curricular and co-curricular activities, foster an interest in “curiosity” and promote open-mindedness.
- Provide students with opportunities to share what they are learning for the larger campus community.
- Encourage the development of student organizations related to academic disciplines.
- Invite faculty and staff to engage in conversations about the liberal arts education.
- Discuss how disciplines fit within a liberal arts education to connect with students’ life and career goals and to help students think about why they are in college.
- Discuss what liberal arts means to the campus community.
- Develop honors programs and/or opportunities.
- Create more community-campus and government-related activities that involve students in projects and partnerships.
- Encourage faculty and staff to attend teaching conferences and internal UW Colleges professional development meetings (such as the ESFY Spring Conference, SLOAN-C workshops, the First-Year Seminar Instructor Retreat, etc.) and participate in email discussions related to their fields of study.

At-risk students

- Regularly communicate to faculty, staff, and students information and about high-risk classes and DFWI rates, and facilitate discussions about how to support students in these courses.
- Make readily available to IAS and faculty course goals and sample syllabi for high-enrolling courses, and provide resources on effective instructional methods within their disciplines
- Engage students in at-risk interventions; having intentional conversations with students about their progress and providing them with opportunities to develop better study skills and discipline-specific skills are effective approaches to this type of intervention
- Across the curriculum, consider and implement effective strategies which integrate discussion of and scaffolded assignments to support the development of these skills:
 - Library familiarity
 - Discipline-specific note-taking, study, and test-taking skills/strategies
 - Management of academic challenges within the discipline
- Develop support for our students' families in their transition to college (e.g. family day, family workshops, convocation activities, all-campus picnics, new student orientations)

Understanding and Advising Our Students

- Improve orientation for new faculty, IAS, and other staff that covers ESFY initiative, information about high-risk courses (i.e., those courses that continually have high DFWI rates), understanding who our students are, and "best practices" for engaging students in class
- Develop a list of topics related to students that need to be addressed through professional development and consider possible delivery mechanisms to convey this information to instructors. Possible topics could include how instructors can initiate out-of-class contact, how to notice and combat students' perceptions of instructor indifference, how to help students organize study groups and why they are effective, etc.
- Be intentional about fostering student-faculty connections outside the classroom
- Coordinate advising efforts for career, curricular, transfer, and financial aid advising.
- Develop collaborations between academic departments and Student Services to document information about majors in their disciplines and information about best transfer institutions for these majors.