Building "College Knowledge" through a First-Year Advising Communication Plan

Susie Brubaker-Cole, Jeff Malone and Tristen Shay
Learning Outcomes

• How to inventory current communication to students

• How to evaluate that communication

• How to leverage current communication practices and to create new ones for student success
“What Does This Even Mean?”

• How many emails DO students receive?

• What messages are sent and how many overlap or contradict?

• What assumed knowledge do we place on first year students?
Starting the Inventory

• Started with communication around Academic Standing

• Sub-Committee requested templates of communication from all major offices
  - Academic advising at the “College” level
  - ROTC, Housing, Athletics, TRIO style programs, etc.
Inventory Results

• Over 80 pages of templates collected with different terminology used in almost every template

• Up to 7 different points of contact per student, per term.
Applying the Results

• Sub-Committee issued 13 observations, suggestions for best practices

• Things we considered:
  - Suggestions on terminology changes
  - “Voice” in emails
  - Consistency in referring to academic policies
  - Streamlining who communicates with students and how

• Full process completed in a month with only 4-5 meetings
Creating a Communication Plan

• Are there conspicuous gaps or absences in your messaging?

• Are we, as university agents, speaking a language that students understand?

• Is our communication timely and pro-active?

• Are we giving them tools to succeed, or early signs that we want them out?
Activity

• What do students at your institution not know that they need to know?

• What information gaps should a FY Advising Communication Plan cover?
FY Advising Communication Plan

• Messaging should serve as a success “protective factor” that helps keep students in good academic standing by giving them the tools to succeed:

  - Key deadlines and milestones that a student needs to know to be successful

  - Key habits and practices of successful students
Overview of FY Advising Communication Plan

• 2012-13:
  - Setup and Process

• 2013-14:
  - Adjustments to Automation
  - UHDS (University Housing and Dining Services) Posting
Distribution and Implementation

Distribution:
- Email
- Twitter
- Facebook
- Web sites

Implemented by:
- Designated Academic Advisors
- Student Affairs staff and support offices (Academic Success Center, Educational Opportunities Program, etc.)
Facebook and Email

From: Stubblefield, Ashleigh
Date: Tuesday, April 16, 2013 8:23 AM
Subject: Get Ready for Midterms

Web Version

It’s already week 3, are you ready for midterms?

Also, hopefully we will see everyone at the First-Year Matriculation Ceremony tonight, it’s at 5:30 PM at Watskybome 109. You’ll meet your major advise and have the chance to hear from our dean.

Spring Term Week 3 – Get ready for midterms!

While it may seem like spring term just started, midterms aren’t that far off. So here are some suggestions to help you get ready for them.

• Check your course syllabi.
• Ask! Contact your professors — after class, during office hours, or via email — to clarify questions and make sure you know what to expect from your exams.
• Consult these study tips, especially the section on test preparation.
• Get support! The Academic Success Center, Writing Center, and Collaborative Learning Center (CLC) are ready to help you. Taking classes online? Contact the Ecampus Student Services Center.

Oregon State has lots of resources available to help you do well in your classes, so take advantage of them and have a good week!
Project Assessment Year One

Year One:
- Student Focus Group (attempted)
- Academic Advisor Feedback
- Bitly (https://bitly.com)
  - How was it used
  - What does it tell us
## Example of Bitly Tracking

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date Released</th>
<th>Build Date</th>
<th>Links via Shortlink</th>
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<td>12/5/12</td>
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<td></td>
<td>FYE website (academic resources)*: 39 (as of 1/11/13) out of 39</td>
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| **W2** | Jan 10, 2013  | 12/13/12   |                     |
|        |               |            | FYE website (main page)*: 14 (as of 1/16/13) out of 14 |
|        |               |            | FYE website (advising page)*: 8 (as of 1/16/13) out of 8 |
|        |               |            | MyOSU Portal*: 11 (as of 1/16/13) out of 11 |
|        |               |            | Registrar's Office Adding Courses*: 6 (as of 1/16/13) out of 6 |
|        |               |            | Registrar's Office Dropping Courses*: 1 (as of 1/16/13) out of 1 |
|        |               |            | Registrar's Office (main page): 4 (as of 1/16/13) out of 4 |
|        |               |            | Registrar's Office (registration info page): 6 (as of 1/16/13) out of 6 |
|        |               |            | FYE website (academic resources)*: 3 (as of 1/16/13) out of 3 |

| **W3** | Jan 16, 2013  | 12/13/12   |                     |
|        |               |            | FYE website (advising page)*: 13 (as of 1/22/13) out of 13 |
|        |               |            | Registrar's Office Adding Courses*: 8 (as of 1/22/13) out of 8 |
|        |               |            | Registrar's Office Dropping Courses*: 3 (as of 1/22/13) out of 3 |
|        |               |            | Center for Civic Engagement*: 9 (as of 1/22/13) out of 9 |
|        |               |            | Study Abroad First Steps*: 12 (as of 1/22/13) out of 12 |
|        |               |            | Study Abroad International (main page)*: 2 (as of 1/22/13) out of 2 |
|        |               |            | Undergraduate Research*: 6 (as of 1/22/13) out of 6 |
|        |               |            | FYE website (main page)*: 23 (as of 1/22/13) out of 23 |

| **W4** | Jan 22, 2013  | 1/8/13     |                     |
Assessment Year Two

Ongoing:

• Analytics

• Student Focus Groups

• On-going Feedback
Outcomes

• Greater integration and coherence of messaging

• Creation of a unified institutional voice about what it means to be a successful student

• Ubiquity of messaging across complex R-1 university structure

• Ultimately: creation of FYE Task Force and emphasis on integration and coherence.
University First-Year Messaging Inventory

University Housing and Dining Services

First-year advising communication

CONNECT Crew pilot program

Other noteworthy events/occurrences
## University First-Year Messaging Inventory

### Fall

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**A – Attendance**
- Term  planning
- Is your schedule manageable?
- Are you ready for midterms?
- Experiential learning
- Have you met with your advisor?
- How are you doing in your classes?
- 5/1/21: Registration starts!
- Make a study plan for finals

- First week is done!

**Discussion topics:**
- Learn about each other, meeting new people, making friends
- Meeting people/making friends, current student experience, prioritization/time management
- Discussion topics, current student experience, winter registration/help, career exploration/campus and online career resources
- Discussion topics, current student experience, expectations vs. realities of OSU, ways to stay connected as a group

**Homcoming**

**W registration begins**

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[Oregon State University]
Learn More About our FY Communication Efforts

Join Jeff and Kerry Thomas at 9:15am on Wednesday for:

“Building a Cross-Campus, Collaborative Academic Success Intervention for First year Students”

To learn more about the “STAR” program supporting academic success at OSU.
Questions?

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