Each year our diverse community of curious and committed individuals grows as undergraduate, graduate and professional students join us in Bothell, Seattle and Tacoma. It is not a foregone conclusion that each student will experience a smooth and successful transition — so, a concerted effort drawing upon expertise across the University is needed to make this possible.

We continually build, examine and improve programs and initiatives that help our undergraduates, graduate and professional students transition to the University. We provide critical resources and deep and applied learning experiences that open pathways for a student to develop a spirited intellect, an innovative mindset and an enduring dedication to enrich our communities.

Featured in this report is some of our most recent work to bring the Husky Experience to life for new students across our three campuses — guiding and supporting students as they learn how to navigate on their own. These and other endeavors employ a range of best practices in unique ways that can serve as models for peer institutions.

Engaging early and often with faculty is, of course, a key component of a first-rate university experience and many such opportunities are highlighted here. Professional staff also play pivotal roles in the education of UW students. In no small measure, their expertise and wisdom drive the success of the Husky Experience.

A spirit of togetherness is infused throughout the many ways we welcome students. Whether through formal participation in one of our many programs and initiatives or informally as a fellow Husky who offers guidance in passing moments, please consider ways in which you can support the transition of new students.

Together, we can connect students to resources, people and opportunities they might otherwise miss as we inspire them to engage fully in all the UW has to offer.
UNIVERSITY 101

To overcome information overload, organizers “flipped” orientation for the Seattle campus.

Many of the more than 8,000 first-year students who enroll on the Seattle campus will experience an in-person Advising and Orientation (A&O) Session, organized by First Year Programs (FYP). Operating within Undergraduate Academic Affairs, FYP is dedicated to facilitating transitions for all new undergraduate students. Through A&O, new students receive important information that prepares them to be successful and to make the most of their Husky Experience.

Driven by consistent student feedback about the difficulties in absorbing such a large amount of information in a short period of time, FYP partnered with Academic and Students Affairs in the Office of the Provost and other campus partners to create University 101 (U101), a new online course that begins students’ A&O experience through video before they ever step foot on campus.

Matt McGarrity, a principal lecturer in the communication department, co-led the project and directed the U101 videos. “What we had before was like trying to get students to drink from a firehose,” says McGarrity. “It was simply so much information, coming so fast, at a time when students were mostly excited and anxious about being on campus.”

The U101 project team did not want to completely overhaul the established A&O structure. Rather, they were looking for a way to present the information they already had in a new and engaging way to allow students to better retain information and arrive at campus prepared. The focus became changing the timing and format of information delivery.

Adopting ‘flipped classroom’ techniques (see the Center for Teaching and Learning guide), U101 provides students with video modules to review and work through prior to attending their A&O sessions. These modules introduce information on academic and campus life that had previously not been presented until the in-person A&O session itself.

**Students work at their own pace at home**

U101 is made up of eight modules that students complete beginning two weeks prior to their on-campus A&O session. Through each module, students watch videos featuring students, staff and faculty sharing critical perspectives on how to navigate and succeed at the UW. Students can access the material at their convenience during this two-week period, with the freedom to pause, rewind and watch sections over again as needed.

“Fall 2015 First Years - Seattle Campus:

8,113 students attended an Advising and Orientation (A&O) session in Summer 2015

99.2% of the students who attended an A&O session participated in U101

87.2% of students who participated in U101 agreed or strongly agreed that U101 made them feel more connected to the UW

It was nice to have background so I knew what to expect [at A&O],” explained first-year student Mira Weimer. “I found ‘Campus Life,’ ‘Involvement’ and ‘Doing Well in Classes’ the most helpful modules. College is immensely different from high school so it was completely new information that ended up helping a lot, such as getting advice about attending office hours and learning about the various clubs and organizations on campus.”

At the end of each module, students complete a short survey that gives them a space to reflect on the information covered and ask questions they may have for their in-person A&O session.

**Arriving prepared to interact and make decisions**

Through U101, students learn how to access the people and resources at A&O more efficiently and effectively. “After going through U101, students can arrive at orientation with informed questions for their orientation leaders and advisers,” says McGarrity.
The early exposure to A&O materials also lets first-year students customize some of their in-person experience. Because U101 freed up time previously dedicated to information delivery, "students were given more opportunities to 'choose their own adventure' for special topic information sessions, such as studying abroad and getting involved on campus," notes UW senior and two-time orientation leader, Hannah Frisch.

Orientation optimizes engagement efforts

U101 offers students a chance to better maximize their A&O time by going deeper into common questions and information, ultimately strengthening their Husky Experience. First years are more prepared to engage with orientation leaders, make connections with their peers and ask meaningful questions because they are less overwhelmed by the mass of information they are asked to digest.

As McGarrity explains, "Students can get the most out of this University — networking with professors, thinking about how courses are constructed, and cultivating their Husky Experience deliberately with a sense of what experiences they want to gain."

Beginning in 2016, the Graduate School will be introducing a version of the program called U501, giving new graduate students the opportunity to also be able to engage with pre-orientation material before their arrival on campus.

After U101, 92.2% of students reported that they feel “more prepared” to begin their on-campus Advising & Orientation (A&O) session. Photo courtesy of First Year Programs.
To help students access and understand critical transition information, campus partners came together to reach students where they’re already looking — online at MyUW.

Before they can take advantage of the many resources and opportunities that can help shape their Husky Experience, students have to know when, where and what those opportunities can be. But with a university this big, students have long reported that they struggle to process all the available information; then, when they realize they need something specific, they don’t know where to look.

Providing custom, just-in-time communication

In 2015, #ThriveUW launched as a pilot program on the Seattle campus to deliver information crafted specifically for first-year students in a timely, direct way through the MyUW homepage and mobile app. First-year students receive weekly messages specially crafted by faculty, advisers and experienced students aimed at helping them become aware of the many resources and opportunities at the University while presenting strategies to help them make the most of the information. The #ThriveUW program expands the ability to reach these first-year students, bringing them closer to the campus programs that can help them have a truly transformative educational experience.

“While the Husky Experience is different for every student — each of them chooses a unique set of academic and out-of-class experiences that contribute to their learning — we know that making sure they are knowledgeable about opportunities is an important first step,” explains Michaelann Jundt, associate dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs. “#ThriveUW is a way to make sure that all first-year students receive the same message about the wealth of resources and activities available to them.”

During fall 2015, message content covers a wide range of topics, among them: tips and tools for stress management and wellness, directing students to advising resources to work on an academic plan or the Career Center for a career preparation strategy, and why getting involved outside the classroom through student organizations and campus events is important to their development.

For instance, the #ThriveUW messaging about library resources reads: “Need help with research? Librarians are experts at finding answers and navigating and evaluating information resources.” It presents a “Try This” suggestion, with simple actions and steps to encourage students to make their first connections with UW Libraries, and then includes helpful links for quick access to additional resources.

Strategic partnering with live campus events can boost participation

The timing of events such as Dawg Daze and others by partner units like the Career Center and Housing & Food Services reinforced the information new students were receiving through #ThriveUW. For example, Odegaard Library held a “get to know your library” event following their related #ThriveUW messaging. “We were able to connect with undergraduate students in a fun, informal way and inform them about Library services and resources,” explained Amanda Hornby, teaching and learning program librarian at Odegaard Undergraduate Library. “#ThriveUW also enables us to highlight the resources and people most relevant to new UW students and by so doing help to demystify a complex and large library system.”

By the end of the first phase, the UW Libraries are one partner that has seen positive results. Programs such as Residential Life, Peer Advisers and others are integrating #ThriveUW as a resource for anyone working with first years. UW-IT continues to gather data and assess the efficacy of the program, but early results point towards success — student polls show that first years have an increased knowledge of campus resources and opportunities compared to previous years. Through the creative collaboration of campus partners, #ThriveUW is getting results and benefiting students.
During Advising & Orientation (A&O), first-year students and their parents receive a copy of the Husky Guide — a comprehensive booklet that functions as an extended reference guide during A&O as well as throughout their first year at the University.

The 50-75 page guide supports first-year students through their transition to life at the UW. Information ranges from resources about choosing classes and finding a major to transportation, housing and student health and wellness. The guide also highlights campus resources and services such as the Career Center, the Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity, Study Abroad, Hall Health, University Libraries and many others.

The Husky Guide was introduced in 2015 to replace the 300+ page planner previously given to first years in an effort to be sustainable and in recognition of the increasing use of online calendars. For parents of international students in China, the Husky Guide is distributed online in Chinese as an additional resource.
UW BOTHELL’S HUSKY LEADERSHIP CAMP

First years interested in leadership get a head start with the right tools and a network of peers

Orientation & Transition Programs at UW Bothell offers incoming students multiple ways to begin their university journey. Its award-winning Husky Leadership Camp (HLC) is one such choice that uses leadership as an organizing concept to bring together students from all backgrounds before they begin their courses in the fall.

“I think the whole camp is a way for the students to learn about themselves, and to learn about their leadership style,” says Taylor Sims, a senior studying community psychology and consciousness studies and who has been both a participant and a student organizer for this supplemental orientation program. Structured as a three-day retreat, it provides students with tools for leadership and personal success in order to create their most fulfilling Husky Experience.

How Husky Leadership Camp gets students involved

Incoming students learn about HLC when they sign up for their Advising & Orientation Program. It is currently offered on a first-come, first-served basis for $100, although the organizers are looking into adding an application and developing a process for providing financial aid. Other similar programs for transfer and international students are also being considered.

Sims, who took a year off after high school graduation, saw HLC as a way to become familiar with the Bothell community. “I was never really involved in school other than sports, but then I saw how much fun my friends were having at college, so I signed up [for Husky Leadership Camp]. It's nice to have that first connection when you walk into class and know somebody,” says Sims. “To me that was the biggest plus.”

According to Terry Hill, director of Orientation & Transition Programs, the primary goal is helping students get a jump start on leadership opportunities their first year. Along with that, the camp addresses a common student concern: “We know many students...feel like they are starting over and it can be intimidating to try and get involved,” says Hill. HLC helps them figure out where to start and to identify what they have to offer in a new environment, regardless of their level of involvement in leadership opportunities prior to enrolling at UW Bothell.

Leadership activities introduce new skills or build on existing ones: As a student organizer for HLC, Sims has learned about the important connections among self-discovery, reflection and leadership style. At the camp, new students spend time bonding and thinking about skills through games and activities grounded in student development theory. “They all come in with different styles, so the games show them that they can work together to get the task done,” he says.

Also embedded in the program is a diversity training module. Through this segment, students learn how to work through difference and with people of diverse identities, whether that means different ethnicities, socioeconomic status or even personality types. Reflecting upon this element of HLC, Sims added, “Our community is leadership-oriented around diversity, so it’s how a UW Bothell student can show this and the leadership perspective we gain from coming here.”

Peer-to-peer insight makes the challenges of new college experiences more manageable: Orientation & Transition Programs made a purposeful decision to put much of HLC's organization and implementation in the hands of student leaders. Hill points out that this eases the transition for incoming students since they are likely to see the student Orientation Leaders who ran HLC when they are making their way around campus during the first few weeks of the quarter.

This peer-to-peer approach helps new students feel as though they have someone to talk to or ask questions. “Plenty of students come in with no idea of how the system works, so we assist them anyway we can — give advice about work and courses, what the workload is like,” says Sims. The time management workshop was particularly popular for the way the students broke down the hours they spend outside class each day. “We can use our personal experience as students to get them to think about a different perspective,” says Sims.

Putting new skills into practice with leadership opportunities reserved for camp participants: To continue the learning initiated through the HLC program, its organizers provide participants direct paths into campus volunteer opportunities. In addition to meeting the needs of campus organizations, this is intended to help the students stay connected to their network while branching out to build new ones. Such opportunities include working with ASUW-Bothell, the Campus Activities Board and the Universal Leadership Conference committee.
Kimberley Cross is a first-year student who is now vice president of the Residence Hall Association after attending the 2015 HLC. “Husky Leadership Camp allowed me to use skills and apply them to a new environment,” says Cross. “One of the concepts we discussed was inspiring a shared vision, and I have done that in my current leadership position and in my classes. What this essentially means is contributing to something that everyone in a group wants, or motivating others to help create an environment or outcome that is wanted by everyone.”

Reflecting on the outcomes

A spring reunion is an opportunity to bring HLC members back together to check in with each other and with peer mentors. “We have them reflect as a group on their experiences so far, and set goals for the rest of the year,” says Hill.

The efforts and organization are paying off. “So many of our student leaders on campus have actually done the camp,” says Hill. “It’s great to hear them talk about how the camp really helped them jump in.”

Sims himself is an example of a student who recognized the immediate and longer-term benefits of the HLC program. Today, as an Orientation Leader, he works with new students throughout the year.

“It’s leadership, so the whole point is taking that next step in your education,” says Sims. “If you’re at HLC, you’re an ambassador showing what a UW student should be.”

The activities at Husky Leadership Camp are designed to encourage self-discovery and reflection, and help students form a community so that when the academic year starts, they see some familiar faces around campus. Photo courtesy of UW Bothell Student Affairs.

BOTHELL CAMPUS QUICK FACTS

Based on Fall 2015 data

INCOMING STUDENTS

691 First-year students
775 Transfer students

89% of students are in-state

48% of incoming first-year students are the first in their families to earn a four-year degree.

251 MILITARY VETERANS

35% of undergraduate students are eligible for federal Pell grants

64% of students are students of color from diverse backgrounds
UW TACOMA’S TRANSFER PEER ADVISERS

New transfer students learn from those who know best — peer advisers who transferred in themselves

“Near-peer” programs in which advanced students advise, mentor and support new students are tried and true elements of many orientation and transition programs across the country. This can be especially helpful in orienting transfer students, helping them be as efficient as possible with their time on campus before graduating. Keeping stride with this best practice, UW Tacoma’s New Student and Family Programs offers incoming transfer students many opportunities to engage in near-peer relationships with more senior students. This program is part of the Student Transitions department, which oversees student opportunities beginning at orientation and continuing throughout their first year.

“Students really connect with a peer mentor if they have something in common,” says Amanda Bruner, director of Student Transitions. “If there’s one more dimension there, like the school you both transferred in from, being in the military or raising a family, it’s an opportunity to self-identify with someone else.”

Bruner’s observation hints at a way in which UW Tacoma has taken this best practice to a new level. By hiring transfer students for a new Transfer Peer Adviser (TPA) program, incoming transfers can connect with peers with whom they share common experiences as well as challenges. For example, in addition to being able to make connections based on similar backgrounds, new transfers can learn from upperclassmen TPAs who have made the most of their experience despite having less time to engage with campus life before graduation, or having additional demands on their day-to-day schedules such as careers and families.

“As a transfer student myself, I noticed there was a need for transfer students not being met,” says Gurjot Samra, a senior studying environmental science. He first voiced the idea for dedicated Transfer Peer Advisers after he realized many other transfer students felt the same way.

Bruner and Stephon Harris, associate director of New Student & Family Programs, recognized that implementing this idea offered the opportunity to meet multiple needs with one solution: hiring transfer students to help other transfers validates the experiences of both while offering upperclassmen meaningful leadership opportunities.

Validating student experiences as assets to their education

Validation theory is the foundation of the Transfer Peer Adviser program. Says Bruner, “Our students are coming in with a lot of life skills that will help them succeed in college, so how do we validate that?” Their team designs programs to help students see their life experiences as assets and to recognize on their own how to apply that to be successful in college and beyond.

According to Harris, this asset-based approach calls for intentional, proactive affirmation in order to:

- Validate students as creators of knowledge and as valuable members of the college learning community.
- Foster personal development and social adjustment.

Transfer Peer Adviser Melissa Workman, a senior studying history who returned to school later in her life, sees the value of this approach. “We are a unique group of peers for other students to have access to,” says Workman, a single mother of two from a military family. “We can provide sound and informed advice because of our experiences.”
Key areas of focus by the Transfer Peer Adviser program include:

New students receive affirmation early and often: “When entering college, there is a critical opportunity for new students to receive affirming messages that they bring experiences and knowledge that will help them succeed,” explains Harris. Positioning peer mentors at New Student Orientation sets them up to connect with new students right away, so that later in the year, incoming students have a peer resource to turn to if needed.

TPAs draw on their own experiences to help new students avoid letting the small details hinder persistence and success: New students dealing with the transition to a new campus are less intimidated to ask fellow students things like, “Where do I go to eat during the day?” or “Where do I buy a parking pass?” These kinds of questions are part of “the business of being a student,” says Harris. “They sound like little subtleties, but in the scheme of things they’re not because they dictate a lot of student success, and whether or not a student will stay.”

All the TPAs work to connect students with UW Tacoma’s Husky Success workshops, which focus on practical topics such as looking ahead to register for classes, how to prepare for a career and how to connect with peers in their own program. “They think about it from their perspective — they transferred in, too,” says Harris about the TPAs.

Focusing on careers faster: TPAs are trained to know a little about all campus resources, but the Career Center is a central focus. “We know our transfer students have a much shorter time here,” says Bruner. “A career is really on their minds, so we’re excited to have our Transfer Peer Advisers give concrete guidance on how to think about internships, fellowships and expanding their perspective of what professional development can look like.” Leading by example, TPAs develop their own skills as they attend workshops as well as learn how to work with campus partners.

“Transfer Peer Advisers have run the gamut of good and bad college and life experiences. We all have attended multiple colleges or universities, and we have been able to succeed in one way or another,” says Workman. “I didn’t want students like me to miss out on their college experience just because their life has other obligations.”

TACOMA CAMPUS QUICK FACTS

- 4,629 students at UW Tacoma
- 11% first-year students
- 64% transfer students
- 64% of first-year students whose parents do not have college degrees
- 10% of students receive veterans benefits
- 91% of students are in-state

Based on Fall 2015 data
Transitioning to college can be especially challenging for international students. Through leadership studies, domestic students facilitate smooth transitions and inclusive engagement as Husky Presidential Ambassadors.

Universities across the nation are working to further connect international students and create a globally engaged campus environment for all students. Increasing globalization also raises the demand for graduates with higher competencies in cross-cultural communication and practice. Engaging together in cross-cultural leadership studies, undergraduates learn to think and connect across boundaries, enhancing all students’ Husky Experience.

Learning from a pilot orientation program

Global Affairs and First Year Programs saw an opportunity to connect and engage incoming and returning students from the U.S. and overseas through a study abroad program. Because Chinese students make up the largest number of international students on campus, they held the pilot program in China.

In 2015, they partnered with Regional Advancement to pilot the Husky Presidential Ambassadors program, a study abroad program in which 20 upperclassmen traveled to China to bring a short orientation experience to incoming Chinese students. The organizers agreed it was a success, but they knew it could be more.

Partnering with the Husky Leadership Initiative

The team engaged the Husky Leadership Initiative in order to further anchor the program in the Husky Experience. "We are seeking innovative ways to make leadership education accessible to all UW students, and we believe leadership studies can cross cultural barriers in the ways we wanted," says Fran Lo, director of the Husky Leadership Initiative. Lo is co-directing the new program with Liping Yu, senior lecturer of Asian Language & Literature. They developed a leadership curriculum that students will begin together in China and continue on campus.

In summer 2016, 20 UW students selected for their outstanding campus engagement and diversity of background and experience will participate in an Exploration Seminar. A week of coursework on campus will prepare them for their experience in China. They will spend the next week in Beijing experiencing new cultural surroundings. In the final week, they will meet incoming Chinese students and together begin the week-long Husky Presidential Ambassadors Leadership Institute. The students will live and study together in Tsinghua University facilities.

During the institute, Yu and Lo will guide the students in connecting leadership theory to practice. They will meet with government officials, business leaders and community change agents while also engaging in skill-building and self-reflective opportunities to accelerate their personal leadership development. The students will continue to explore leadership perspectives across boundaries when they arrive on campus. In the fall they will continue their education through an on-campus seminar and participation in Unite UW, a domestic-international student exchange program facilitated by Student Life.

Through strong campus partnership and creative collaboration, the Husky Presidential Ambassadors Leadership Institute is an innovative education model cultivating globally-minded leaders who are prepared to create connections across boundaries and work together for a world of good.

For my part, I learned that Chinese students are a lot like me. They have the same questions and worries that I had when I first started college. When I started at the UW I was very nervous, and I was only moving from Spokane. I can’t imagine moving halfway across the world. This experience totally changed my perspective on international students.

KIM BOUDREAU
Senior, Business major
NEW & RENEWED: MORE RESOURCES FOR INCOMING STUDENTS

AT BOTHELL

**New Students Networks** build community and support for often invisible affinity groups with unique transitional needs – people who could benefit from the support of peers but have no way of otherwise finding each other. The networks are part of an Orientation and Transition Programs (OTP) initiative that is piloting three networks for those who self-identify as first generation, GLBTQ, and/or veteran. OTP plans to add three new networks in 2016: students who identify as students with children, students with disabilities, and undocumented. As the groups discuss expectations and norms unique to the UW Bothell culture, the networks build community by connecting peers, focusing on identity development and improving the campus’ ability to respond to the needs of invisible identities.

AT SEATTLE

**Student Veteran Life** is a new office in HUB 327 that centralizes services and programs to holistically support and represent the needs of student veterans and their dependents through community building. Founded by student veterans for student veterans, Student Veteran Life is led by a team of experienced and diverse veterans so that transitioning student have access to someone who has shared their unique experiences. While the existing Veterans Center focuses specifically on providing financial services, the new unit cultivates a sense of pride among a diverse community of scholars – about 1,400 across campuses – who have served their country and now want to advance their lives and education at the UW.

The **Commuter & Transfer Commons** (CTC), formerly called the Commuter Commons, assist students who have transferred to the UW and live outside the U-District to create a sense of identity and community. The recent name change is inclusive of all students who use the space. Located at HUB 141, the CTC hosts programming such as CLUE tutoring and community development events. Services available to assist commuters include day-use lockers, kitchenette, printing, and a private changing room. Currently about 23,200 undergraduates commute to the Seattle campus from near and far. Each year over 1,800 transfer students are admitted to the UW, many of whom are also commuter students.

AT TACOMA

The **Summer Bridge to Success** program is an intensive month-long, 5-credit course before the new academic year. Students attend college success workshops designed to support them in their first course that also help them develop skills necessary for academic success. Students learn how to access and use academic support services and are mentored by upperclassmen who themselves participated in Summer Bridge before their first year. Instructors who work with first-year students say that not only are Summer Bridge students more prepared, but they act as role models for other first years. Data shows that Summer Bridge students are more likely to persist and graduate.
FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

To ensure first years have options to create meaningful academic connections, First Year Programs coordinates opportunities for personal classroom experiences.

First-year Interest Groups (FIGs): Creating small communities at a big university

Operating within Undergraduate Academic Affairs, First Year Programs (FYP) is dedicated to facilitating transitions for all incoming freshman and transfer students. One option FYP coordinates, First-year Interest Groups (FIGs), brings students together in small cohorts where they become part of a learning community of peers as they embark on their Husky Experience and make connections both academically and socially.

Since 1987, these FIGs have given first years the opportunity to fulfill General Education requirements while learning about campus resources and connecting with upperclass student mentors. As a result, they develop skills and build connections that will lead them toward a successful undergraduate experience.

Low stakes courses encourage exploration: Students enrolled in a FIG take a 2-credit course (graded credit/no credit) called General Studies 199: University Community. This weekly seminar is led by an upperclass undergraduate FIG Leader with 20 to 25 students. Beyond GEN ST 199, FIGs may also be clustered with an additional one, two or three classes, generally organized by academic fields such as pre-engineering, pre-health, environmental studies or political science. This model allows students to explore new academic topics with other students who share common interests.

"Joining a FIG that catered to my academic needs and interests has been a highly enriching experience," explains freshman bioengineering major, Rebecca Darrow. "Not only did it connect me to amazing undergraduate students who can share their experiences with me, but I met so many friends who share the same interests. Since all my classes were attached to my FIG, I had a close-knit group to study with. My FIG encouraged me to put myself outside of my comfort zone and network within the UW community — my first quarter would not have gone nearly as well if I had not joined the FIG."

Experienced students serve as leaders: FIG Leaders gain first-hand leadership and mentoring experience, get practice teaching and managing a classroom, and learn how to be a mentor for younger students. For first-year students, having a direct relationship with an experienced student helps them in their transition to UW.

The classes and assignments designed by FIG Leaders in the University Community course are centered on themes from the FYP common curriculum. The curriculum includes the five themes of Transition, Critical Thinking, Academics, Community and Professional Pathway. Activities and assignments may include experiential projects such as an in-depth exploration of Seattle neighborhoods where students practice observation, reflection, research and synthesis, and presentation skills. They may also engage in career preparation with workshops on LinkedIn and resume writing, and Q&A panels with upperclassmen about choosing majors and getting involved around campus.

Departmental partners are key to success: Over 40 departments collaborate with FYP to provide these grouped classes. They coordinate schedules and ensure spaces are reserved for about 70 unique combinations of classes in some 160 FIGs. With about half of the first-year population participating in FIGs, these departmental relationships help ensure that all students who are interested have the opportunity to be a part of this enriching program.

Brian Fabien, professor of mechanical engineering and associate dean of Academic Affairs, addresses the value of this type of early academic access. "Working with First Year Programs to offer FIGs provides new students with the opportunity to begin exploring their academic interests in engineering," says Fabien. "These FIGs are a great way for students to learn about departmental requirements, ask questions about degree programs and decide which engineering disciplines interest them the most."

In First-year Interest Groups (FIGs), first years learn how to succeed in and out of class as they find out about different aspects of the UW from upperclassmen. Photo: Jill Reddish
Collegium Seminars: Small-setting engagement with faculty

The Collegium Seminar program offers first-year students a specially designed opportunity to build connections with faculty and peers for more personal interactions and in-depth discussions. These seminars often serve as an introduction to college-level critical thinking and engagement. The 1-credit seminars are graded credit/no-credit to encourage students to explore new subjects in a low-risk environment.

As of the 2015-16 academic year, the program created a strategic partnership with FYP and the Husky Leadership Initiative in an effort to expand and integrate leadership education into the classroom. With the Husky Leadership Initiative partnership, the seminars become a place where the teaching and learning of leadership skills is made explicit by weaving discipline-specific concepts of leadership into seminar curriculum. Through this integration, students begin to associate their developing identities as intellectuals with a sense of responsibility and opportunity to engage in leadership and apply their knowledge in the world.

Since many introductory level courses commonly have large enrollments, first-year students benefit from a wider selection of small classes, especially those with low-stakes. The seminar program expands its selection of smaller settings by capping enrollment around 18 students. The style of interaction also helps students begin connecting with faculty early on in their academic careers.

The seminars' variety of subjects is reflected in the breadth of departments that offer courses each year: 14 departments were represented in the 32 seminars available during the 2015-16 academic year.

The benefits of the program also extend to the faculty who teach them. “Collegium Seminars give faculty a chance to explore topics outside of their normal teaching area, or, if it’s a topic that they do cover in their teaching load, they can offer it in a unique way,” explains Taso Lagos, affiliate instructor in the Jackson School of International Studies. Lagos leads a seminar called Hollywood Dissent and American Democracy.

Clarence Spigner, professor of Health Services and adjunct professor in American Ethnic Studies and Global Health, is another instructor who goes outside his regular courses. In his seminar Good Books: Race, Gender and Diversity, students conduct critical analysis of a book of their choice, reflecting particularly on themes of race, gender, ethnicity and well-being.

Lagos has been involved with the program for two years. “For the freshmen who take [seminars], I think they also feel liberated — putting the emphasis on knowledge and discussion rather than information retention,” he says. Collegium Seminars serve as one starting place for first years to learn how to engage in thoughtful conversation and reflection, leading discussions and developing community among themselves.
STARS: WASHINGTON STATE ACADEMIC REDSHIRT PROGRAM

To raise persistence among at-risk students, the College of Engineering tailored a program with intensive early academic and holistic support

The College of Engineering’s many departments have among the most demanding curricula at the college level, and many students change course after challenging math, chemistry and physics prerequisites. The uneven preparation from low-income high schools doesn’t give at-risk students much of a chance, and those are the students who often struggle to adjust quickly enough to college life and the high-stakes, fast-paced course load. Looking for ways to address these issues while increasing diversity, the College of Engineering adopted STARS, the Washington State Academic RedShirt program, a National Science Foundation-funded retention program, in 2013.

“This is an academic redshirt year versus an athletic redshirt,” says Sonya Cunningham, assistant director of Diversity & Access, who oversees the program at the Seattle campus. “It means essentially we want you on the team, but you’re not quite ready. Students start exercising their academic muscles for a year.”

About 32 incoming first-year students from Washington who qualify for certain financial aid are invited to join the intensely rigorous program based on their expressed intent to major in engineering. Grit and resilience are the other essential ingredients, so students are comprehensively screened for a strong drive to complete an engineering degree.

Courtney Seto, an industrial and systems engineering major who joined the STARS program in 2013, appreciates the time and support that let her adjust to new expectations. “At first I thought the STARS courses wouldn’t be that hard, but it was definitely harder than I thought it would be. The classes taught me study skills, how to work on your own and be independent and self-motivate.”

The STARS program helps students adjust by fostering a supportive community, focusing on core academics, and showcasing options and opportunities to help them choose the engineering path that is right for them.

Fostering community requires a multipronged approach: Beginning with their own transition week at the start of the academic year, STARS students spend a lot of time together. They are required to live on campus for two years (starting in fall 2015). The College of Engineering, according to the College of Engineering, historically, fewer than half of the entering first-year engineering students at the UW will complete their degrees. The success rate is even lower for students from low-income backgrounds. The STARS program is designed to dramatically change these outcomes.

A first-generation college graduate herself, Sonya Cunningham, assistant director of Diversity & Access for the College of Engineering, advises STARS students. Photo: Filiz Efe McKinney
2016, they will live in the Engineering Living Learning Community), they go through many required classes with their cohort and Cunningham even requires them to attend group study sessions. Joshua Quichocho, a computer engineering major who started with STARS in 2014, says, “At first I didn't like it, but over time it became really useful. When I work with other people, I can work much longer. I get really tired doing one hour of calculus on my own.” Having dedicated staff support also goes a long way and STARS students are required to meet quarterly with their academic adviser in their first year and at least twice during their second year.

“Often students think all they need to do are academics. Well, it would be nice if human beings could live in a compartment like that,” says Cunningham. “But students are typically navigating way more, and everything that happens to them outside of academics affects how they’re doing academically.”

Building academic skills and persistence for high-level applications: Even for students who had good grades in high school AP Calculus, math for engineering is at a whole different level, focusing on problem solving and critical thinking for practical applications rather than memorizing formulas. The faster pace can often mean that one failed test early on tips a student toward giving up rather than readjusting their expectations and working harder. But with a little extra preparation and time to adjust, they can still be successful. “Because students have so many struggles in math and chemistry, we wanted to make sure they had a really good foundation to work off of,” explains Cunningham. Seto saw the value early on. “The math class was helpful for the intensity of preparation because the first test was so in-depth and made you think critically,” she says.

Demystifying and preparing for career paths: With so many different majors that can lead to specialized careers, many students know little about opportunities for the future, whether they were previously exposed to high school engineering programs or not. Yet by the end of their first year, STARS students must choose a major and apply. Engineering Exploration is a class designed to demystify the various fields, and, though it is open to all UW students, it’s required for STARS students in their first quarter.

“Faculty come to talk about different departments and the research they’re doing because we’re trying to get students to be open to new possibilities,” explains Cunningham. STARS students also complete a Career Services certificate, learn about internships and practice professional development skills early on.

STARS students who earn a 3.0 at the end of the year are guaranteed admission to an engineering department, and the majority are accepted by their first choice. By their sophomore year, even though they are still taking prerequisites, they are able to start integrating into their department and building relationships with faculty that can lead to research and internship opportunities.

By the end of their redshirt year, Cunningham sees the transformation in each student. Seto stayed involved as an upperclassman to mentor new students through the engineering First-year Interest Group and to help plan community-building events and activities. Quichocho relishes his early acceptance to his chosen major. “A few of us talked about it, and if we weren’t in STARS, we wouldn’t be as prepared,” he says.

The College of Engineering reports that the STARS program is already positively impacting student retention and performance. STARS students in the first two years achieved higher GPAs and performed better in their math and science courses relative to eligible but non-participating students. Survey data also show that STARS students are significantly more familiar with student resources around campus. The college is also getting more diverse as it grows: Enrollment of under-represented minority students in engineering has increased by 93.5% since STARS began, while enrollment in the college as a whole increased by only 30.5%.

Today’s engineering graduates will work in an increasingly diverse workforce while solving new problems. So far, challenging students to commit to hard work while providing a foundation of academic, personal and professional success resources and services is resulting in graduates who will truly be prepared for the field of the future.
GRDSCH 200: PREPARING FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION

When undergraduates are unsure how to choose the right next step, this course guides them on their path

GRDSCH 200: Preparing for Graduate Education is a course designed to help undergraduate students ask and answer the questions about graduate and professional school that will help them find the path that’s right for them, whether they decide to pursue an advanced degree at the UW or look into other options. It offers an overview of the structure and organization of graduate education, and focuses on helping students learn the skills to find resources, build a network and make decisions about continuing their studies beyond the baccalaureate.

“We wanted a course that could help students prepare graduate school application materials as well as help them think through the often mysterious question of whether or not to go, and what to pursue and why,” says Katy DeRosier, director of program development for the Graduate School.

The course originated in 2010 when a Graduate School committee charged by then-Dean Jerry Baldasty identified a need to provide a specific type of guidance at such a critical juncture for students. “We see the entire cycle, and are privy to what works and where there are issues,” says DeRosier. The course quickly became popular enough to offer it throughout the academic year, and has even been designed for delivery in summer quarter and in online and hybrid formats.

“Our role became helping students develop the skills to find the people and resources that can help them,” says Tylir McKenzie, the program development coordinator who taught the course from 2013-2015. According to McKenzie, certain populations, such as international students and transfer or returning students, can benefit even more from learning about the process and how to talk about themselves and their goals.

A focus on fit sets this program apart

Many graduate school prep programs focus on test preparation or how to draft personal statements, but GRDSCH 200 is centered on the idea that students are more likely to be successful if they find the right match in a program.

“We know that being in a program that is a good fit for the student and the department helps with retention and preparation for a career,” explains McKenzie. “We believe we have a conceptual model that is uniquely ours.” This focus sets the program apart from other graduate prep courses in that students learn how to identify and emphasize key points about themselves in an application, highlighting to an admissions committee why they are a good match for the program in question.

Framing self-discovery through an adaptable schema: Because the course must be flexible enough to cater to students who are all at different points of self-discovery about their individual interests and goals pertaining to graduate study, the course developers designed it around a “Self-Advancement Schema.” This schema has four distinct phases: discovering, identifying, seeking and joining. Phases can be returned to at any point in the process, and inherently build upon each other. The schema helps students identify and articulate where they are, what they have already done and what still needs to be addressed.

“Of course, these phases can be applied to more than just seeking graduate education — no matter where you are in life, you’re asking these big questions — so it’s helpful here because it gives students the space to sit back and really reflect on what they want,” says McKenzie.

Issa Abdulcadir, a pre-doctoral instructor in sociology, teaches students in GRDSCH 200 how to think about and articulate their goals for graduate studies. Photo: Jill Reddish
Zhara Rehamani, a senior studying sociology and early childhood and family studies, signed up for GRDSCH 200. “Tylir walked me through asking myself, ‘What's the big picture? What do you really want?’” she says. When Rehamani graduates in spring 2016, she will be the first in her family to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Students in similar situations can benefit particularly from GRDSCH 200 programming that explains the subtleties of how to build relationships with faculty and advisers who can guide them through decisions on careers and classes, and ultimately write letters of recommendation.

Education graduate student Jordan Sherry-Wagner is also a first-generation graduate student who was looking for guidance about his decision to pursue a post-baccalaureate degree. For him, GRDSCH 200 offered the right combination of self-assessment sessions that helped his personal statements alongside practical help on applications. “I was still fairly unsure of my motivation, and the application process seemed complex. Hearing the experiences of others and scaffolding us through the process demystified and humanized it all,” he says.

A hybrid option balances in-class access with in-demand business hours: The course has been offered as in-person only, a hybrid of in-class and online, an intensive summer workshop and a new online-only format, with the hybrid claiming the best feedback for course delivery. McKenzie explains this is likely because offering some content online for students to consume at their own pace frees up time during the day for assignments that involve meetings with professors or interviewing current graduate students. Reserving time for in-class meetings, however, lets students take advantage of special access that the Graduate School can offer, such as panels with admissions officers or graduate students who share their recent experiences. “That’s where we have information that the student may not,” says McKenzie.

Guiding students toward their goals

The course draws on the wide variety of resources the UW has to offer, and it is the combination of deep dives and breadth of access that seems to be paying off. Through self-reported data, student feedback shows that they are leaving the course able to express their goals and make informed decisions — with many being accepted to their graduate programs of choice. Students report acceptance to master's and doctoral programs at UW, Columbia University, the University of Southern California and more. The course assists students from a variety of academic backgrounds, and the numbers of transfer, international and first-generation college students have also increased.

“There’s something here for everyone, but certain students will benefit more,” says McKenzie. From their personal statement to creating a strong portfolio or learning about research funding, GRDSCH 200 helps students connect the dots between their academic learning and their personal and professional goals to ready them for the next step.

Self-Advancement Schema

There are four distinct phases within the schema used in GRDSCH 200: discovering, identifying, seeking and joining. Phases can be returned to at any point in the process and inherently build upon each other. While there are four distinct phases, they are not linear nor necessarily cyclic. These phases can apply to more than just seeking graduate education.
CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

The goal of the Provost's Leading Change in Public Higher Education report series is to broaden and connect conversations on the UW's three campuses, share best practices and provide common reference points to inform our plans for the future. We welcome your participation, feedback and suggestions at edtrends@uw.edu.

UW RESOURCES

- Flipping the Classroom
  Center for Teaching & Learning
- Making Leadership Explicit in the Classroom
  Husky Leadership Initiative
- First in the Family: Advice About College from First-Generation Students by Kathleen Cushman from Student Tips for Success at UW Tacoma

FURTHER READING

The literature on student engagement and development indicates that students need assistance and support as they adjust to campus life, build networks and connect their learning on both sides of the classroom door to their personal and professional ambitions.

This support can be found in a variety of places on the UW's three campuses, such as Undergraduate Academic Affairs, the Graduate School, Student Life and the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity at UW Seattle; Student Affairs at UW Bothell; Student & Enrollment Services at UW Tacoma; and departmental advisers, student life units, and the campus career centers. Additional resources and relevant literature examining the many ways in which faculty and staff can support student development is included below.

- Journal of College Student Development
- Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice
- Journal of the First Year Experience & Students in Transition
- Journal of College Orientation & Transition
- The College Student Affairs Journal
- Enrollment Management Journal
- Student Affairs Today
- About Campus
- Essential Learning Outcomes Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP)
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