

LeaRN Academic Plan 2009-2014

Program Mission

LeaRN's mission is to initiate, coordinate, and assess services and programs that support student success, especially in lower division courses. LeaRN raises visibility of college transition issues and enhances learning through a network of partnerships that include substantial student leadership. These partnerships also join the knowledge and skills of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs in foundational learning opportunities for students. LeaRN's mission focuses on three primary areas: USP Core Curriculum, learning communities, and academic support.

Relevant Institutional Issues

LeaRN strives to increase meaningful access to college learning and success for first and second year students at UW. As Hathaway scholarships and rising employer criteria encourage more and more students to enroll at UW, programs that support students from diverse backgrounds and educational preparedness are crucial to helping students negotiate the bridge to college work and expectations. In addition, faculty benefit from greater awareness of learning habits and attitudes of current first-year students as well as effective classroom approaches.

UW statistics from 1998-2008 show consistent and fairly dramatic increases in both GPA and fall-to-fall retention for students who participate in freshman interest groups (FIGs). Conditionally-admitted students who participate in the Synergy Program also show higher GPAs and retention as compared to conditionally-admitted students during the years before the program expanded. This data supports Academic Affairs and LeaRN's commitment to increasing the number of learning communities for entering students to include undeclared learning communities, co-curricular learning communities, and informal cohorts generated by blocked first-semester courses. In addition to constituting one of the most effective avenues to access and persistence for students, learning communities foster inter-course and interdisciplinary connections, relationships that inspire deep and life-long learning.

Previous Planning Accomplishments

Spring 08- Fall 08	<p>Increase faculty collaboration and RA mentorship within FIGs</p> <p>While FIGs at UW have remained steady in enrollment numbers over the past six years (approximately 200 students each fall), faculty collaboration and RA participation within FIGs has somewhat diminished, in part due to “fall out” of individuals initially involved in developing FIGs at UW. Because faculty connections and peer leadership are cornerstones of effective freshman interest groups, LeaRN worked over the past year to re-invigorate collaboration within FIGs by creating a FIG guidebook for faculty</p>
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	<p>and RAs and leading the first FIG colloquium in spring 2008 for faculty to meet in cohorts and discuss possibilities for collaboration. In addition, LeaRN offered FIG RAs a small stipend to attend one or more courses in their FIG during the semester and help students with course assignments and exams. Eleven of the twelve FIG RAs opted to attend a FIG course and meet more regularly with faculty.</p>
Spring 08-Fall 08	<p>In collaboration with Athletics, plan and develop athletics power groups for undeclared, scholarship athletes, including focused supplemental instruction in the learning community courses</p> <p>LeaRN assisted with planning and implementing the athletics learning community for undeclared, scholarship athletes in fall 2008. LeaRN's current role in the learning community is to support the athletes through supplemental instruction in English 1010, POLS 1000, and first-year math courses.</p>
Summer 08	<p>Plan, lead, and assess Synergy-only Orientation session</p> <p>In an effort to help Synergy students experience greater integration with the learning community during June Orientation, students in Synergy attended a specific session open only to students in the program. Over 70% of conditionally-admitted students attended the Synergy Orientation, and instructors in the Synergy Program met with their students in cohorts. Orientation survey data showed that students' satisfaction with the Synergy session was markedly higher than other Orientation sessions.</p>
Fall 07-Spring 08	<p>Plan transition program for incoming students in fall 2009</p> <p>During the past academic year, a committee chaired by LeaRN and Residence Life & Dining met to plan a transition program for all incoming students in fall 2009. The transition program will focus on helping students acculturate to the critical thinking and discussion emphases of college courses, as well as introducing students to course and communication etiquette. The second day of the program offers community-based activities for students to participate in service learning and outdoor experience, including community clean-up projects, work for local non-profits, and trips to wilderness areas. The program activities and timeline have been solidified; implementation will continue through spring and summer 2009.</p>
Spring 08	<p>Lead "Teaching Writing in Wyoming" colloquium for secondary and college level teachers throughout the state</p> <p>In partnership with the ECTL and Wyoming School-University Partnership, LeaRN headed a committee of University and high school representatives in fall 2007 to plan a state-wide colloquium focused on bridging gaps between high school and college curriculum in reading and writing. The two-day event in Douglas, WY drew sixty participants from the primary, secondary and college level. In addition to generating productive discussion and cross-level connections, the colloquium served as a crucial starting point in drafting a document comparing characteristics of writing classes at</p>

	<p>Wyoming high schools and colleges. In addition, the colloquium led UW writing instructors to consider more effective transition strategies for homework expectations and the new reading-centered curriculum in ENGL 1010. LeaRN offered grant opportunities for participants interested in implementing a cross-school or cross-district curriculum project, and two teams received grants.</p>
<p>Fall 07- Fall 08</p>	<p>Lead monthly brown bag workshops related to transition issues and best practices in teaching first and second year courses at the University</p> <p>From fall 2007 through fall 2008, LeaRN led nine brown bag workshops focused on teaching strategies for first and second year courses. Popular topics included negotiating the transition into first-year coursework, teaching critical reading, and successfully facilitating peer review. In an attempt to reach a wider audience, summaries of the research and approaches for each topic were mailed to UW faculty. LeaRN has received requests from Casper College and LCCC to send the “LeaRNing Notes” to their faculty.</p>
<p>Fall 07- Fall 08</p>	<p>Revise and distribute Academic Success Guides</p> <p>Because of the popularity of Kelly Lowe’s <i>Your Road to Academic Success</i> guidebooks for incoming students in 2005-06, LeaRN revised the guide for freshmen entering in fall 2008 to include tips on managing independence, studying effectively, negotiating the first four weeks, and learning from student and faculty interviews. LeaRN trained RAs in the dorms to implement discussion of the guides in the preliminary floor meeting.</p>
<p>Spring 07- Fall 08</p>	<p>Develop a centralized supplemental instruction program</p> <p>LeaRN followed three avenues in developing a supplemental instruction program: inviting faculty to apply for grants to pilot innovative supplemental instruction in their courses, targeting high difficulty first and second-year courses and partnering with departments to implement supplemental instruction, and working with the Writing Center and Math Lab to pilot group-tutoring for English 1010 and several first and second-year math courses. With some additional funds from Student Affairs, LeaRN hired and trained thirty-three supplemental instruction student leaders in multiple departments in fall 2007 and spring 2008.</p>

Action Items

I. Academic Support

I.-1

Apply for the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) tutor certification grant and build consistency in tutor training across campus (Athletics, academic support centers, departments) by working with departments and support centers to institute tutor certification within their programs. 2009-2014

I.-2

Locate and implement supplemental instruction (SI) within high difficulty first and second year courses across departments. Create on-going assessment of the impact of SI in various courses and disciplines. With the assistance of a trained intern, solidify supplemental instructor training and support over the semester. 2009-2014

I.-3

Explore transition guidance and support for non-traditional students at UW, including military veterans enrolling in (or returning to) college. 2010-2014

II. Learning Communities

II.-1

Implement and assess the Transition Program for entering students. Build additional learning community opportunities over the next several years to connect with the transition program and continue in the first semester.
2009-2014

II.-2

In partnership with the Registrar, Admissions, and the Center for Advising, implement a pilot program for blocking first semester courses in selected majors. In fall 2009, pilot majors include Molecular Biology and Animal and Veterinary Science, Criminal Justice, Theater and Dance, Kinesiology and Health, and Nursing, Pre-Pharmacy/Health Sciences Undeclared. Assess the impact of course blocking on student learning and persistence, and explore possibilities for expanding the program to additional majors on campus. 2009-2014

II.-3

Assess persistence and academic success in the Synergy Program. Investigate approaches to extended ENGL 1010 or basic writing courses for underprepared students. 2009-2014

II.-4

Implement and assess the undeclared learning communities, including student involvement, feedback, and persistence compared with undeclared students who do not participate. Develop further first-year cohort opportunities for undeclared students. 2009-2014

II.-5

Building on FIG's success in academic performance and social integration with campus in 2007-2008, continue assessing and facilitating avenues for greater connections within FIGs. Raise awareness of FIGs and positive impact on student success and persistence within the campus community.

III. USP Core Curriculum

III.-1

Facilitate a grant project for enhancement and innovative approaches to college transition within I-courses. As efforts continue to increase the number of students enrolling in I-courses in their first semester, integrate teacher training for teaching study skills, time management, and reading strategies within I-courses. Explore ways to connect the grant projects to the Transition Program. 2009-2010

III.-2

Continue the "Teaching Writing In Wyoming" state-wide colloquiums. Work with Leslie Rush and Colin Keeney to develop connections with teacher training at UW and with the Wyoming Writing Project. 2009-2014

III.-3

Institute a work study program focused on student participation in evaluating first-year courses and gaps in student expectations. 2009-2014