

Strategic Plan Proposal
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Expanding Pre-Orientation

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Background: Pre-orientation programs have proven to be an integral part of the overall orientation experience for students. They have resulted in higher rates of retention of participants as compared to non-participants, as well as high levels of satisfaction with the experience. Currently the college offers eight pre-orientation programs that can accommodate approximately 300 new first year students. Each year we have a waiting list of students we cannot accommodate due to space restrictions. It is proposed that we expand these offerings to include all new first year students and blend pre-orientation into the required orientation program to provide all new first year students with an interest-based, small group experience.

Connections to the strategic plan:

Strengthen essential student capacities

Pre-orientation programs start students off on the right foot. They provide connections to faculty, staff and upper class student leaders who provide a base of support for students. They introduce them to the rich academic and co-curricular resources of the college. They also help students begin the journey of critical thinking and intellectual discovery that is critical to their overall development.

Promote a culture of research, inquiry and discovery

Many of the current pre-orientation programs involve introducing students to these facets of education.

Expanding the opportunity for participation to all new first year students, as well as the types of programs offered, will enable the college to broaden the scope of students as they contemplate how they want to engage in the community intellectually and socially. It is also the hope that expansion of the programs will allow us to involve more faculty in pre-orientation programs, thus allowing more students to become aware of and involved with faculty research.

Encourage purposeful engagement with society's challenges

All of the current pre-orientation programs have this as a basis. First Link, our community service-based program, is one of the most desired opportunities. Expanding this offering and creating more of the like would be a priority. Cultural Connections challenges students to think about their place in a diverse community and expanding this offering would also be a priority. In addition, any new programs would have this as an underpinning.

Deepen students' appreciation of other cultures and global issues

This is a goal of the current set of programs and would be a focus in developing new programs. Currently the International Student Pre-orientation Program is only available to international students due to the nature of the program. An additional set of programs that focuses on global and cultural issues would be key to the offerings, as well as an underpinning of the entire set of programs.

Prepare women for rewarding lives in a rapidly changing world

Currently the Leadership Program addresses these issues directly, and the other programs more indirectly. Expanding this area to include ideas such as the new college undertaking that examines "women's voices" and "creating a life" would be critical as we think into the future.

Open doors to women of promise

When we think about opening doors to students, it is important to remember that early introduction and connection to college resources is critical to their success. Pre-orientation programs provide a small group experience based on interest where students can find that connection. They can also include the quality of life for students by providing them with a smoother transition to the institution as well as a base of friends who have similar interest, who are not associated with their house.

Current Program Components:

The current pre-orientation program is comprised of eight opportunities as follows:

Bridge – an examination of cultural diversity, primarily serving students of color, accommodates approximately 50 students

First Link – community service, accommodates 50 students

Intellectual Inquiry – faculty led delve into the liberal arts and academic discovery, accommodates 25 students

Leadership – introduction to the leadership journey and exploration of personal leadership goals, accommodates 60 students

Cultural Connections – exploration of diversity and living in a multicultural community, accommodates 30 students

Outdoor Adventure – three outdoor programs, accommodates 78 students

Inward Bound – overall focus on wellness, including creative writing, yoga, movement, meditation, accommodates 40 students

International Students Pre-orientation Program – introduction to American culture for international students only

Program Expansion:

Program expansion will include growing current opportunities as well as adding new programs. To accommodate all new first year students the program will need to approximately double in capacity.

Approximately 7 new programs, with a capacity of 50 students in each, would need to be added to the current structure. Participants from fall 2006 have been polled to gather ideas about new offerings. One exciting possibility with expansion is the opportunity to involve more faculty members in the design and direction of programs. This has been a great success with Intellectual Inquiry and holds much potential for future endeavors, possibly tying into faculty research areas.

Budget: Currently students (with the exception of ISP) pay a fee of \$30 to \$50 to attend pre-orientation. If that is a financial hardship, the college waives the fee. The college also offers automatic fee waivers to any students who received an admission deposit waiver. In making these programs part of the overall orientation program, thereby making them mandatory, the college will need to assume the costs in the budget.

\$32,500 (\$50 per student, 650 students) for operating costs for programs, to include supplies, transportation (if needed), photocopying, incidentals, based on

\$21,000 (\$3,000 to \$6,000 per program) for stipends for program designers/directors who are not 12 month Smith staff members who will work either outside their regular Smith contract or as outside consultants.

Total budget: \$53,500 per year