

idea of developing a motivation plan that would support students throughout the year. Best Practices currently being implemented in a number of programs were showcased and discussed. Everyone left the session with a sample plan, and each was asked to submit a plan before leaving for summer vacation. Their individual plans were to include activities, scheduled over the semester, that would accomplish the the Student Success Team's objectives.

When the faculty returned from summer vacations, they met to share and review their plans. It was decided that no regular classes would be held the first day of the semester. Rather, all college programs would begin by helping students make important connections within their new environment. Class discussions would shift from the more traditional overviews of course outlines and textbooks to discussions and exercises focusing on "how to be successful." Icebreakers and team-building exercises would be used to create a new atmosphere in the classroom. The faculty in one program area took the team-building activities outdoors and engaged learners in having fun while developing some new skills—e.g., students learned to juggle multiple objects, simultaneously learning the importance of successfully juggling the different aspects of their lives while going to college. In another program, faculty took group photos and later posted the pictures on bulletin boards around campus. Some faculty invited a number of their alumni to have lunch with the students and talk about their experiences after they graduated from Confederation College. In others, first-year students met with second- and third-year students. The idea was to get people talking, laughing, learning about their new environment, and feeling comfortable!

Some programs handed out booklets of information, including tips about how to survive college, take notes, prepare for exams, write reports and assignments, and study. Faculty spoke about the value of a college education. In one exercise, they asked students to calculate their potential lifetime earnings, comparing the potential earnings of a high school graduate and a college graduate in today's markets. This exercise generated some lively discussions and further convinced students that, indeed, they had made the right choice in enrolling in college.

Results

From our 2002 Student Satisfaction Survey, we learned:

- Ninety-four percent of students surveyed said YES, our college staff were friendly and welcoming! This was an increase of 11% over the previous year.

- Ninety percent said they felt that they had made the RIGHT CHOICE, up 8% over the previous year.
- Ninety-two percent believed they would complete their program successfully, up 19% over previous years.

Among other comments, our learners shared these thoughts about their first-day sessions:

- "I definitely feel more at ease with my choice."
- "I liked listening to graduates and learning about what's been happening to them."
- "We got to know our teachers on a more personal level."
- "Comfortable atmosphere, free food, and I learned to juggle!"
- "I got to know people!"
- "I am excited about my program!"
- "I look forward to this semester—it sounds like a fun, yet challenging (in a good way), program."
- "I like the atmosphere of friendliness."

From our learners' enthusiastic responses, we learned about some adjustments we needed to make for 2003. We believe that we are on to something that is working! Our learners now begin their college experience feeling confident that they have made the right choice and excited about the semester!

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Correction: *Innovation Abstracts*, Vol. XXVI, No. 15, "Getting Them Excited The First Day". The authors wish to acknowledge that the Student Success project described in their article was based on a "train-the-trainer" staff development seminar, "The Right Start to College: Student Motivation Day 1 to Graduation"—a seminar provided by Don Fraser, Professor at Durham College (CN). Fraser is the author of materials used in the the College's first-year student workshops.