ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

The Scholars Program

In 2008, the College of Arts and Sciences created the Scholars Program for first-year students who consider themselves intellectually curious and who desire to be part of a community of students and professors who share this curiosity. The program, which offers a “small college” experience within the larger university, invites students to take one course each term of their freshmen year when they are introduced to some of the more significant ideas and controversies from the past that shape contemporary life. The program was designed to increase the academic challenge first-year students experience and to increase students’ involvement in their academic lives.

http://www.cas.ohiou.edu/scholars/

Difficult Dialogues

The Difficult Dialogues Project is a community of people committed to carefully rethinking and discussing topics that are often contentious and divisive. The Project is an experiment, funded by the Ford Foundation and Ohio University, and formally launched in 2007. The Ford Foundation grant specifically applies to difficult dialogues concerning religion.

The Project is particularly focused at freshmen students. It seeks to give them a taste of how careful thinking and listening, and reading and studying, can change the contours of apparently intractable arguments and so give them motivation to learn for other than pre-professional reasons. It also helps them find friends who are similarly interested in learning (!) during their college education and to value well-considered dissenting ideas.

http://www.ohiodialogues.org/home

Learning Communities

With the assistance of University College, we implemented a number of major-related learning communities for first-year students. In some cases, such as Social Work, these are required courses, while in other disciplines, it remains an option.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

The Psychology Advising and Resource Center

The Psychology department developed the Advising and Resource Center. The Psychology Advising and Resource Center faculty and staff assist students with advising-related issues (including specific faculty advisors for students on academic probation) and with graduate school information. While open to all psychology majors, this has been an added resource for first-year students.

http://www.psych.ohiou.edu/academics/advising.html
Expanded Web Information

We have expanded advising through our web pages and addressed issues related to special populations including first-year, undecided, and multicultural students.

e-News

We send a weekly electronic newsletter to all undergraduate students. This has been a particularly helpful resource to freshmen because we remind them about critical deadlines and policies they might otherwise not know. The eNEWS includes information about students and faculty at OU who have excelled, as well as academic and cultural events on campus and in the community that students may want to attend.

http://www.cas.ohiou.edu/undergrad/cat/advising.asp

Assign faculty advisors before Orientation

We assign advisors to all first-year students before they come to summer orientation. This allows students to make sure their correct major is in the student information system and, if it is not, the adjustment is made prior to their arrival for orientation. This also permits students to contact their advisor before classes begin.

DARS 101

The Ambassadors, our A&S student organization, helps organize DARS 101 information sessions during the fall quarter. The purpose of these informal sessions conducted by an advisor from student affairs, is to teach students how to read and understand their DARS prior to their first “solo” registration.

FASTrack

FASTrack is our program name for workshops developed for first-year students on topics related to academic success. Some previous workshop topics included speed reading, study abroad, and relaxation techniques.

Calls to First-Year Probationary Students

During winter break, we call or send e-mails to all first-year students who were placed on academic probation. Our conversations are geared to help students identify their difficulties and develop a plan for academic success during winter quarter so they can be removed from academic probation and transition into academic good standing.

Orientation Handouts

We developed handouts for first-year students (and parents) to better explain College requirements and how they interface with University requirements.
Undecided Students

a. Creation of new majors- We now provide a choice of 4 categories for our undecided students- Undecided humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, and undecided. Students who are largely undecided but can identify a broad area of interest may indicate this as a major choice, and as a result, are assigned to faculty advisors in that academic domain. These closely matched faculty assist their advisees in learning more about their areas of interest and, ultimately, help them declare a specific major.

b. Registration help - We send an e-mail to all our undecided freshmen informing them about how to register for the winter quarter, along with other helpful hints.

c. Learning communities - Undecided first-year students are now required to participate in learning communities. We were only 50% successful in implementing this policy for Fall 2008. However, we have what we think is a better strategy in place for ensuring greater compliance for Fall 2009.