Introduction

The Office of Undergraduate Studies is a unit of Academic Affairs that offers administrative support for programs, policies, and initiatives designed to enhance and enrich the undergraduate experience at the University of North Florida. In addition to overseeing several units (Office of Faculty Enhancement, Center for Instruction and Research Technology, Honors Program, Undergraduate Academic Enrichment Program, Academic Testing) serving the undergraduate student population, the Office of Undergraduate Studies supports the Transformational Learning Opportunity (TLO) program, the American Democracy Project, and UNF Reads!

This newsletter provides insight into some of the programs and activities that the Office of Undergraduate Studies has been involved with in order to fulfill its mission. Enjoy!

Happenings

2008-2009 Transformational Learning Opportunity Awards

The Office of Undergraduate Studies received 50 applications requesting a total of just over $1 million for creative and worthy projects proposed for the third round of the TLO program. Overall 21 undergraduate
applications were funded. These projects included funding for student internships through the Undergraduate Academic Enrichment Program, service learning in Ghana, and research on coral reef development. To read more about these and other funded projects, please visit the TLO website at http://www.unf.edu/acadaffairs/tlo/awards08.html.

Freshmen to Read *Freakonomics*

The Undergraduate Studies Council and the General Education Council are pleased to announce that *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner has been chosen as the inaugural text for the “UNF Reads!” program.

We would like to thank the University community for their response to the call for a book that all incoming freshmen will read in Fall 08. More than 50 people offered suggestions and the General Education Council, which includes student representatives, discussed the 31 books suggested in terms of the program’s criteria. The Council then read six books and determined that *Freakonomics* best met our criteria: a non-fiction, interdisciplinary text, relevant to the world in which we live that uses evidence to make the case for an interesting or provocative idea.

The goals of UNF Reads!:

1. To create a university-wide learning community;
2. To introduce freshmen to disciplined academic inquiry at the college level;
3. To provide students with models for academic discourse and opportunities to engage in effective discussion;
4. To demonstrate that important issues and new ideas cross disciplinary boundaries.

Research suggests that first year programming can play an important role in student retention.

We encourage all members of the University community to read (or re-read) the book this summer. We hope that many faculty teaching courses next fall will seriously consider using or making reference to the book as a part of their course.

Copies of the book will be made available to all UNF community members interested in participating in curricular and co-curricular programming related to *Freakonomics*.

Questions about this program should be directed to the Office of Undergraduate Studies at 620-2994 or undergrad.studies@unf.edu

The Office of Undergraduate Studies Invites Students to Speak their Minds

In Fall 2007 the Office of Undergraduate Studies launched a brand new initiative called Student Conversations with the Office of Undergraduate Studies. This initiative seeks to improve and enhance the academic experience of UNF’s undergraduate students by inviting students to engage in dialogue with Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Studies, David Jaffee, and Coordinator for Undergraduate Initiatives, Martina Perry. Students are encouraged to share their perspective about what is working well, what is not working, particular challenges students face, positive experiences that should be made more widely available, or suggestions that will enhance the undergraduate experience.

Students are welcome to stop by the office (Building 1, Room 1120) any time from 2pm-4pm on Wednesdays to participate.
The ADP Steering Committee Launches Its First Semester of Events

The American Democracy Project Steering Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Berrin Beasley and Ambassador Nancy Soderberg, kicked-off the Spring semester of events by taking students to Tallahassee to meet with legislators during the "Jacksonville Day at the Capitol" event. Students were able to get an inside look into state government as they attended a Higher Education Appropriations meeting. They also were able to attend a lunch with the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce and hear Speaker of the House, Representative Marco Rubio, discuss the Property Tax Amendment and other important issues of the day. This program was co-sponsored by the Office of the President, Student Government, and the American Democracy Project.

Some of the other ADP events that have taken place or are slated for the Spring 2008 semester:

"Creating the Ideal President: Unlocking the Meaning in Candidate Framing". Monday, February 11th 2pm Building 14, Room 1700. In this presentation Dr. John Parmelee, Associate Professor of Communication, examined candidate framing in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections and how viewers interpret that framing.

Jacksonville Week in Review (TV and radio show) February 29, 2008 at 8:30am at WJCT. Students sat in on a taping of the show and participants of the show then stayed and had a discussion with the students.

Sunshine Week. Students chose an issue and request public records related to issue. Students visited public agencies (such as City Hall) and request the records as a test of agency compliance with Chapter 119 of Florida statutes. Additionally, on Friday, April 18th 12:00pm, Building 15, Room 1303 there will be a panel discussion on public records access entitled "Do You Know What's in Your Public Records? Exploring Freedom of Information in Government". The panelists will include Mr. Joe Adams, author of the Florida Public Records Handbook, Ms. Barbara Petersen, President of the First Amendment Foundation in Tallahassee, and Ms. JoAnn Carrin, Office of Open Government in Tallahassee.

Does the Media Turn Off Young Voters? Students in Marcia Ladendorff's course Media Literacy: Campaign Edition travelled to Washington, DC to create short films centered on the questions: What is the impact of media on the political process? Does that impact result in apathy among young people toward politics? This film screening will be April 24th 5pm-7pm in the Fine Arts Center Recital Hall and it is open to students, staff, faculty, and community members.

National and Global Youth Service Day. Friday, April 25th. Students will participate in community service projects on the UNF green such as Hope for the Homeless, Food for the Famished, and many other service activities. National and Global Youth Service Day Friday, April 25th. Several different service activity stations will be set up on the green, and in front of the UNF library and bookstore including: Hope for the Homeless, Civic Engagement, Elderly Outreach, Food for the Famished, Kids Korner, and Great American Bake Sale.

Students Organize UNF Voices Forum

On March 25, 2008 more than 50 UNF students and faculty members participated in the first UNF Voices Forum. The forum was focused on the question: Who Holds the Power in American Democracy? Issues related to the role of the individual in our representative democracy were discussed. Guest speakers included Duval County Supervisor of Elections, Jerry Holland, and Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Administration, Kyle Scott.

The purpose of the UNF Voices Forum is to bring students, faculty, staff, and community members together to critically discuss public issues. There are
several student groups who have taken the lead on planning and organizing the UNF Voices Forum. Those include Critical Minds, Project Affect, the Progressive Action Committee, Americans for Informed Democracy, and Students Without Borders.

For more information about the UNF Voices Forum please contact the Office of Undergraduate Studies.

Supervisor of Elections, Jerry Holland, speaks to the students at the UNF Voices Forum as Dr. Kyle Scott looks on.

For more information about the American Democracy Project at UNF please visit our website at http://www.unf.edu/acadaffairs/undergrad/adp/index.html.

First Year Students Dive into the Honors Experience

The motto of the Honors Program is "Bridge the Gap between Education and Experience." This means that the Program challenges students to be active participants in their own learning process. This begins when the Honors students arrive on campus. First year Honors students participate in a week-long Honors Orientation that emphasizes leadership, teamwork, and community. For example, one day is spent on a major service project, where students learn about the community while carrying out a project to benefit others. For most of the orientation activities, students are grouped with their classmates for their first-semester Honors class. This allows the students to get to know each other and begin sharing ideas and solving problems together; these are things that they will be required to do in their class.

The Community Service Project is one of the highlights of the week-long Honors Orientation.

The Honors classes are all limited to 20 students, providing the ideal environment for class participation. A special set of Honors courses is reserved for the incoming students. These courses are typically six credits (i.e. double courses) and designed to immerse the students in Honors and UNF with a challenging, engaging, and writing-intensive class. While these classes all count for General Education credit, each one is unique. Professors from across campus are invited to develop courses that will introduce Honors students to some of the most interesting topics and ideas within their fields. Each professor goes out of their way to create a set of
learning experiences that will draw the students in and give them a very hands-on experience with the subject.

In Fall of 2008, incoming Honors students chose from an “atypical” set of Honors courses. For “Documentary Film”, teams of students checked out video cameras to create their own documentaries. Students in the “Genocide” course used methods from Sociology and History to compare and analyze events like Darfur and Rwanda. The entire class flew to Washington D.C. for a tour of the Holocaust Museum. A course on “The Science and Ethics of Disease” was taught by a cancer researcher from the Mayo Clinic. Students in the “Wild Florida” class were advised to bring their sunscreen and mosquito repellent; their field trips included sea kayaking, exploring the Okefenokee Swamp, and snorkeling with manatees.

Students in the Wild Florida class get up close and personal with manatees at Crystal River, Florida.

Undergraduate Studies Council Update

The mission of the Undergraduate Studies Council is to advance the goals of the university as they pertain to excellence in undergraduate education, undergraduate student learning, and undergraduate student development and academic services. The Council has three working sub-committees: Faculty Advising, Retention, and the First-Year Experience.

Retention Sub-Committee to Hold Focus Groups

During the Spring 2008 semester students in Dr. Mary Borg’s classes will be forming focus groups to discuss the issue of retention. They will explore reasons why some students matriculate through to graduation, and why others do not persist at the university. After conducting the focus groups a survey will be created based on issues and themes that emerge in the focus groups.

Additionally, the Retention Sub-Committee brought forth recommendations to the Undergraduate Studies Council to designate a visible individual to oversee retention, and to promote student retention by requiring that all general education courses provide frequent and early feedback to students regarding their academic progress. This feedback would ideally be in the form of graded assignments.

First Year Experience Sub-Committee Prepares to launch UNF READS! Program

As a result of the work of the First Year Experience Sub-Committee, incoming Freshmen in Fall 2008 will participate in a freshman common reading program, called UNF Reads! This sub-committee worked in conjunction with the General Education Council to field book suggestions from the UNF community, and to make the final decision on the book. The book that has been chosen for Fall 2008 is Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything. All freshmen will receive a free copy of the book at Orientation, and will have opportunities to participate in discussion groups focused on the book. For more information please contact the Office of Undergraduate Studies at 620-2994.

Faculty Advising Sub-Committee Prepares to Launch Pilot on Faculty Mentoring

The Faculty Advising Sub-Committee has been working diligently on their recommendation to increase faculty mentoring at UNF. Their recommendation includes the creation of program coordinators in all of the academic departments, whose primary role would be to serve as a mentor to students on what they can expect as a major in a particular field, career opportunities, and any other information concerning classes offered in that particular department. Also, the program coordinators will refer students to other faculty members in the department or other campus resources as necessary to give students further guidance. The program coordinators would be full-time faculty members who have knowledge of their field that students could benefit from.
Currently, the Faculty Advising Sub-Committee is planning to launch a pilot of this faculty mentoring initiative. This pilot will involve identifying at least one program coordinator in each college. For more information about this initiative please contact the Office of Undergraduate Studies at 620-2994.

For more information about the Undergraduate Studies Council please visit the Undergraduate Studies website.

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**TLO Spotlights**

The Transformational Learning Opportunities (TLO) Program, which has made three rounds of awards, impacts students' intellectual and professional development, while giving them a potentially life-changing experience. Below are a few spotlights from the TLO Program. Each Fall semester, faculty and staff are invited to apply for funds to support creative and potentially transformative experiences for students. For more information about the program please visit the TLO website.

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**First Annual TLO Symposium Set for Spring**

On April 15, 2008 the Office of Undergraduate Studies will hold its first annual TLO Symposium. At the symposium faculty, staff, and students will have the opportunity to learn about selected TLO projects have been developed and implemented at UNF. Faculty and staff will be able to gain valuable knowledge about how to successfully design and implement a TLO.

Students along with the faculty leaders will make presentations about their projects. Additionally, there will be a TLO Showcase, that will include poster presentations and a concurrent Roundtable Discussion session, during which attendees can ask questions of the TLO leaders and get further information about their TLO experiences. For more information about the TLO Symposium please visit the TLO website.

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**Students Bring Home Lessons from Britain**

For the past three semesters, education students have been able increase their knowledge of the British National curriculum by interning at public schools in Plymouth, England through an internship program with the College of St. Mark and St. John (Marjon). While in Plymouth they observe, plan, and prepare classroom and individual lessons that have been drawn from the curriculum. Some of the students who participated in this TLO have expressed in their final papers that they felt that some of the teaching methods they observed would be especially helpful in their U.S. classroom teaching. For example, math (numeracy) methods of instruction provided them with new strategies of teaching, including "mental oral" methods of instruction.

About the TLO experience Dr. Lupi said, "As project director for the past three semesters, I have been able to provide, with the assistance of the TLO funds, an experience that has had a tremendous impact on the student participants and
Students dine with their hosts from the College of St. Mark and St. John.

UNFSIFE Shares Business Skills in Zambia

In December 2007, Dr. Fred Pragasam and three UNF students who are members of UNFSIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) had the unique opportunity of traveling to Zambia, Africa to conduct workshops on computer literacy, entrepreneurship and to help develop a business center.

During the computer literacy workshops students taught computer literacy at both the beginner and the advanced levels. UNFSIFE also created an Entrepreneurship Assistance Program with interactive business simulations in which the students could participate. The business development center, which was established at the University of Zambia, will allow students and faculty from the two universities to share information on trade and to provide assistance for entrepreneurs in order to find market opportunities here in the United States.

In addition to giving of their time in the seminars and workshops, the UNFSIFE students made a monetary donation to one local Zambian entrepreneur, who was subsequently able to purchase a supply of chickens for his new poultry farm. According to Dr. Pragasam, "Overall, the UNFSIFE Initiative in Zambia was a tremendous experience. The students were exposed to the culture, socioeconomic factors, and business practices of the country through practical approaches and giving back to the community."

UNF Students Present Research at Conferences

The Office of Undergraduate Studies, along with the Undergraduate Research Program, encourages students to become engaged in research at the undergraduate level. Typically, these research experiences happen in collaboration with a faculty member and can lead to the student’s work being accepted for presentation at a conference in a relevant field. This year, there are several outstanding students who have been invited to present their research at various conferences, and the Office of Undergraduate Studies is assisting them with TLO funds so that they can take advantage of this transformational learning opportunity. Some of the students who have been supported by the Office of Undergraduate Studies include:
Dawn McCormack presents a poster of her research.

Chris Miller -- **Students and Retirement Savings Predictors** -- American Society of Business and Behavioral Sciences National Conference on Undergraduate Research

Julie Delegal -- **Conflict Resolution and Casual Friendships: Self Monitoring Differences** -- Southeastern Psychological Association

Amy Bishop -- **I Don’t Care What Boys Say – Girls Should Look Thin: Women’s Views of Females in Media** -- National Conference on Undergraduate Research

Dawn McCormack -- **Characterization of the Basigin/Basigin-2 Interaction in Mouse Retina** -- South East Nerve Net Conference

Elizabeth Anderson -- **Investigation of ERK signaling through Basigin gene products in retinal epithelial cells** -- South East Nerve Net Conference

To view the abstracts associated with these student research projects please visit the Undergraduate Studies website.

**Staying on Track: Academic Roadmaps Program**

In an effort to guide students through their program of study and improve student graduation rates, the University has begun the process of having each department develop Academic Roadmaps. These Roadmaps provide a guide to students that will inform them of the classes they should take and the order in which they should take them to successfully graduate in 4 years with a degree in a particular major. Additionally, the Roadmaps include Milemarkers, which indicate the critical courses or other requirements that students need to have accomplished by a certain semester.

Currently, the Task Force that is developing this program is working with Banner experts on finding ways to link the Banner system to the Roadmaps. When fully functional, students who are "off-track" will receive a message encouraging them to meet with an advisor and/or consider another area of study.

The Academic Roadmaps Program will help students know exactly what courses they need to take, and hopefully reduce the amount of time it takes them to graduate. This program is in the pilot stage, with two departments from each college developing Roadmaps for their students. The current plan is to have the Academic Roadmaps developed for all academic programs by Fall 2008.

**Suggested Reading**

*The First Year Out* by Tim Clydesdale

In *The First Year Out*, sociologist Tim Clydesdale conducts in-depth interviews with fifty teenagers making the transition to life after high school. His findings directly challenge the many assumptions we make in higher education about the level of
student engagement and intellectual transformation during the early stages of an undergraduate career. Clydesdale's conclusions have enormous implications for how we should support and what we should expect from our college freshmen. For more information about the book, read the review in the Chronicle of Higher Education at http://chronicle.com/jobs/news/2008/02/2008020101c/careers.html.