The Weekly Schedule as a Tool for Transition

BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE
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Overview

• What do students learn when they analyze their use of time
  – About goals
  – About what they do

• What are the implications for students

• Is it hopeless
Conundrum

• Students look forward to college because of the lack of rules & structure - the freedom.

• Both fear and like the freedom. Some mis-use it.

• Colleges expect – courses are built – on 45 hours a week. But we don’t impose the structure.

• Independence is a question most students struggle with
Transition is fraught

• High freedom
• Low structure

• Low motivation
• Low grades

• High attrition
• Low persistence
Recent research

- Spend 27 hours a week - academic activity
- 40 hours in 1960s
- 13 hours a week studying
- Only 20% spend >20 hours (2003)
- % of full-time faculty 52% in 2005
- Down from 78% in 1970s

- Source: “Academically Adrift,” 2011
Shift toward student services

- Ratio of faculty to administration:
- Faculty now 53% of college employees
- Down from 67% in 1970

— Source: “Academically Adrift,” 2011
Time spent studying

• 50 minutes total daily, all classes;

• Works out to 10 minutes per course (weekdays)

Predictors of academic success

• “Perceived Academic Control” Strong predictor of GPA
  • Students more likely to figure out, control what they are required to do
    • Source: Stupinski et al (2008)

• Fear as a motivator:
  – High academic preparation, high motivation:
  – Fear of failure linked to higher GPA
    • Source: Perry et al (2005), Perceived Academic Control and Failure in College Students: a Three Year Study of Scholastic Attainment”
Predictors of total success

• Factors correlated with success (44% correlation)
  – Clear goals
  – Time management skills
  – Less passive activities
  – Good diet
  – Early to rise
  – Enough sleep

• The other 56% hard to explain

Source: George, Time Diaries
Other predictors

• Ability to set clear goals
• Ability to monitor progress
• Feelings of self-efficacy (have the skills to be effective)

• Self-efficacy strongly correlated with persistence in college
• Sense of personal responsibility for success or failure
• Colleges should help students set goals
Motivation

• Commonly heard:

• “Good students can overcome bad teaching.
• But good teachers cannot overcome poor students.”

• But can help students set goals
Mirror Effect

• Used to be said “you are what you eat”

• Really what’s true is that “you are what you spend time on”

• The examined life: Expose students to that concept. It can be a change agent
  – Any good behaviorist will say that you have to track behavior before you can change it.
  – Change depends upon what commitment, what understanding you have of your goals and behaviors
Exercise: Goals and Time

• Exercise for students reflect on what their goals are and how they spend their time.
• Understand what that implies about their goals.

• Frequently, what a student spends time on is not what their goals are.
• Students come to college with the same goals:
  – Do well, be well prepared for a career.
  – In general goals seem clear. They acknowledge them publicly.
  – Often this is the first time they have put in writing what their goals are.
Making Goals Explicit

• Ask students in first class
  – Why did you take this class?
  – Why are you at Bergen?
  – What are your goals -
    • Class?
    • College?

• Begin process of self-reflection
• Make goals explicit
• Write before speaking
• Put ideas on paper
Student’s Time Diary

- Assign weekly time schedule
- Anonymous
- Discuss categories
- Results: similar to national research studies
Students’ reaction

• Interested in summary of class schedules

• Surprised:

  Less time on schoolwork
  More time online: gaming or social networking
  More time working at jobs
  More downtime
Intentional and Unintentional Goals

• They may not intend to spend most of their time online and less time studying.

• But there are intended and unintended goals. When they spend time on activities, those become the goal.

• Objective of the Weekly Time Diary: to make the difference explicit.

• “You Are What You Do”
Groundhog Day Effect

• If you behave the same as in the past you will have the same results
  – If you study the way you did in high school
  – You will learn what you learned in high school
  – You will be a high school student, not a college graduate

• For our students, hope they don’t have that experience

• Hope this assignment helps them gain insight, ability to see what they are doing and reflect on it
Insights

• Hope students get insights:

• Sometimes spend time on activities or behaviors not consistent with their goals

• Things that matter – e.g., passing a course – sometimes underrepresented in the weekly schedule

• Is it hopeless? No! But this assignment takes time.
Freshman Orientation

• Deans in the past would warn:
  “Only 1 out of 3 of you will be here in June.”

• They were right:
• Fear of failure is a significant motivator