

## **The IOWA Challenge Years 2,3 & 4 Work Group Final Report**

Submitted March 1, 2010

### **Work Group Members**

Maureen Beran, Tippie College of Business  
Melissa Shaub, Office of Student Life  
Stephanie Preschel, University Housing  
Len MacGillivray, Chemistry  
Stacy Narcotta-Welp, Pomerantz Career Center  
Jean Florman, Center for Teaching  
Brian Corkery, Academic Advising Center  
Kathy Magarrell, University Libraries  
Pat Mason-Browne, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  
Jane Schildroth, Pomerantz Career Center (Chair)

The group began with a discussion of the many ways second-year students differ from first-year students. It was pointed out that second-year students may feel as though they are slogging through required coursework and “the bloom is off the rose” compared to their first year. Many do not have definite career plans and consequently, lack motivation for classes. The students may realize that connections that should have been made during their first year were not made and some disappointments have surfaced by this time. Academic growth may drop off as a result. On the other hand, many have gained some confidence and are also living on their own for the first time. All of these factors must be kept in mind as plans are made to place The IOWA Challenge into their consciousness. Our group remained cognizant of our charge – to deliver a set of strategies to extend the reach of The IOWA Challenge to second-, third- and fourth-year students.

This work group also reviewed initiatives that are underway or planned. These are listed below:

- Community 234 will be offered by the Office of Residence Life to expand programming for second, third and fourth-year students living in Parklawn in the fall 2010.
- Proposed: Every Living Learning Community will have a “Personal Librarian” for the students to contact any time during their first 2 years at the University. Librarians will be available to help students find resources for their assignments, to provide one-on-one consultations, and to offer a wide array of other services.
- Students in academic difficulty will eventually have access to both peer and Faculty help through the Office of Academic Programs & Services, using a space in SH.
- A CLAS advising group will begin with the purpose of sharing good departmental models.

There was agreement that an opportunity exists to empower second-year students by using The IOWA Challenge. Our first priority recommendation is a fall event for second-year students to celebrate their return, promote engagement and empower them in guiding first-year students in the IOWA Challenge. Our suggestions for implementation follow:

- A student advisory group should be established as this event is planned.
- This event could be held during Welcome Week – a breakfast coffee shop, a lunch picnic at Hubbard Park or a Lunch with the Chefs just for sophomores. “I’m Baaaaack” might be the theme.
- There needs to be a structure for collecting student ideas for how to carry out the goal of communicating The IOWA Challenge.
- There also needs to be a “telling” portion: what to expect during your second year.
- Perhaps a local corporate sponsor could support this event and have a table staffed by their representatives.
- Key offices might also be represented at tables, with engagement as a focus.
- Third-year students could participate to speak about what they did as successful second-year students.

The second priority is to raise awareness within the Faculty of the importance of receiving second-year and third-year students into their departments for advising. Staff members of the Academic Advising Center discuss the process of changing advising whenever possible. However, a change in major or credit hours can trigger a change in a student’s advising assignment without an opportunity for AAC advisors to address a student’s entry into a new major. This moment of entry is important to students but often happens with little departmental fanfare; leaving students on their own to find their way in the new departmental home.

It was also suggested that this transition into the academic departments be given a name that indicates a progression from the living/learning communities to “Learning Communities” or “Major Communities.” (another name might be more marketable, but the concept would be the same.) This process would be run by departments and might culminate with a capstone course. This would give a structure for students new to a major to enter and perhaps a group for them to join. Thus the pathway for academic engagement would flow forward.

The following points were brought up in discussion:

- Education, Business and Nursing each have a structure in place for this transition.
- Student organizations affiliated with departments allow students to connect to their new major.

- Peer advising (such as Psychology) helps students learn more about their new major as well as empower the peer advisors.
- English uses graduate students for advising to ensure students receive guidance without over-taxing faculty members.
- It may be possible to utilize funds the department receives for the teaching of first-year seminars to sponsor events.
- In the spring term, second-year students could be “matched” with third-years and with Assistant Professors to learn more about major coursework and related careers.
- Each Faculty member could select students to help introduce the major and discipline to students who are new to the department.
- Biochemistry and International Studies have a 0-credit course for orientation to the department.
- Business has an orientation that incorporates the IOWA Challenge message for students newly admitted to TCOB.

After these first two priorities, the group concluded that another relatively easy and short-term strategy is to use ICON to promote The IOWA Challenge by adding You Tube videos of student “testimonials.” Also, Faculty members could choose one of the challenges to feature on their ICON site as their background theme for particular courses. This combined Faculty and student services strategy is the preferred method of operation. Whenever possible, the lines between them should be erased for the benefit of the students and they should work together for this common goal.

Early in our discussion, the group supported the strategy of Faculty staying connected with students in their first-year seminars – long after the seminar has concluded. This connection might be through emails or informal meetings. This could go a long way in helping this group of second-semester and second-year students remain engaged.

Active learning techniques are strongly recommended by the work group for use in all courses. For example, case studies engage students in the “real world” and help them understand the relevance of their efforts. The University of Minnesota is emphasizing inquiry-based teaching and learning and new TILE classrooms are being designed on our own campus. The group feels that Faculty members who are open to these innovations would also be open to The IOWA Challenge message.

The following strategies fall into the longer-term range but certainly deserve recognition as second-year students are confronting the challenges:

- Students and Faculty should continue to work together on research, perhaps increasing the opportunities available for students to engage in research.
- Specific pathways or “recommended routes” could be created to guide students through the various challenges detailed in The IOWA Challenge.
- Engagement fits well into the second year, so establishing more ways for students to learn how to become engaged is important.

- Second-years could be responsible for guiding first-year students via a mentor program; third- and fourth-years could assume specific roles with underclassmen.
- Perhaps we need second-year seminars.

As our focus shifted to third-year students, it was realized that their approach to studying changes as the complexion of their courses changes. They encounter more essay exams, presentations and projects. Because most students at this point want to do well, the competition increases. Faculty members are teaching subjects closer to their own research and would likely be willing and able to discuss career options with their students. This offer could be added to course syllabi, a step that would help bring down barriers between Faculty and students.

Third-year students may not have been admitted to their major of choice and feel they have failed. Others move easily to Plan B. The popular question at this stage is “What are you going to do with your education?” Departments and colleges might consider increasing programming that helps students answer this question. Internships are more valued than in earlier stages, so initiatives that lead students to the Pomerantz Career Center for aid in obtaining internships is important. Points that have not been mentioned earlier in this report are listed below:

- Living-Learning Communities hold great promise for communicating The IOWA Challenge message.
- Transfer students need to be included in all strategies and possibly strategies created solely for their unique needs.
- A student organization at the departmental level can help bring transfer students (and others) into the fold.
- For third- and fourth-years, there may not be as much “guidance” needed or wanted and programming may not be as beneficial. Some may have become engaged as they provided guidance to others, but certainly not all.
- Third and fourth-year students can relay the message to first- and second-years that the career center is available to help students early and also following graduation.
- There should be a service learning focus for third-year students because these students have developed enough knowledge and confidence to effectively negotiate these experiences. Service learning also provides additional opportunities for development.
- Alumni could be useful as students inquire about careers. More information is needed about ICE-net for both students and Faculty.
- The career time line provided by the career center could be useful in the transition to the academic department for advising and could be customized to be discipline specific.
- The phrase “Pick One” could apply to this career time line, easing some of the stress of accomplishing everything on the list.

This work group appreciated the opportunity to think and work together, adding our various perspectives into the charge we had been given. The format is good – a short time frame with a specific goal. We hope our discussions will lead to meaningful implementation.