

Magnifying the “Bright Spots”: Finding and Using What Works

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Bright Spots Agenda

- First Year Experience (FYE) overview
- Bright Spots
- Best practices
- Next steps

Kent State University



- 4,000 new freshmen every fall
- All take First Year Experience (FYE) course
- All FYE courses taught within respective academic unit (college)

First Year Experience (FYE) Overview

FYE in the U.S.

- Enhance academic and social integration to college
- Facilitate opportunities for support and interaction with fellow classmates and instructor
- Freshman orientation has existed since the 19th century
- First credit-bearing course in 1911
- 87.3% of colleges and universities have some type of first-year seminar
- Contents and goals vary among institutions

(University 101 Programs, 2015)

FYE at Kent State

- Sense of connection has always been important
- Learn about, and/or connect with, college, resources, peers and self
- 1972 Commuter pilot program
- Orientation + major/career introduction

FYE at Kent State: Current Needs

- Determine the value of our FYE program
 - Are we doing the right things?
 - Are we doing things right?
- Build course reputation
- Provide high-level support and development for instructors to thrive

Bright Spots

Bright Spots

- *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard* By Chip and Dan Heath
- Research what already works in the everyday
- Focus on those results that be replicated in the day-to-day environment
- Share in a peer-friendly manner

Bright Spots Example – Save The Children

- Six months to make a change?
 - Water supply
 - Education
 - Infrastructure
 - Poverty

TBU

Bright Spots Example (Continued)

- Instead find nourished children
 - Disqualify – not helpful to village as a whole
 - Father lived overseas and sent food
 - Qualify – in general helpful to village
 - Ate when sick
 - Ate 4x/day (but same amount as 2x)
 - Ate “low class” food
 - Ate “adult” food
- Cooking classes for mothers, by mothers (share in peer-friendly manner)

Image retrieved September 24, 2014 from:

<http://www.crowdfundinsider.com/2013/08/21713-sustainable-responsible-impact-sri-investing-conference-learns-about-crowdfunding/>

Kent State University Example

The Study



- 13-14 Academic Year
 - Fall 10-12 data
- Look at retention rates by instructor, by college
- Top 30% retention rates for at least 2/3 years

The Numbers



- 13 Bright Spots instructors
- 12 instructors invited by email to interview (1 no longer at KSU)
- 10 interviewed
- 90-minute, open-ended, conversational
- 3 interviewers
- 2 disqualified

Best Practices

Best Practices: Humanising the Facilitator

- **Wheelhouse**
- **Facilitator**
 - Creating an environment where students engage with each other
- **Comfortable with vulnerability**
 - Not knowing every answer
 - Sharing personal stories

Best Practices: Seeing and Showing Value

- Course and assignments
 - **Stating** what you value/why it is **relevant**
 - Giving **expectations** that reflect value
- Students
 - Methods were unique to instructor (pictures, names, celebrations)
- Goals
 - **Work with** the student (not for, not against)

Best Practices: In the Literature

- Students as partners in learning (Caboni et al., 2002) (*Work with not for/against, valuing student*)
- Teaching techniques focused on active learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) (*Facilitator*)
- Value authenticity (Nielsen, 2014) (*Wheelhouse/Vulnerability/Humanizing the Instructor*)
- Setting high expectations (Chickering & Gamson, 1987) (*Showing value in course and assignments*)
- Support students in pursuing their own goals (Garner, 2012) (*Valuing the student, work with not for/against*)

Next Steps: Sharing Results

Sharing Results – Ideal

- Peer-to-peer
 - Focused on Bright Spots mindset (not in with a list of to-dos)
 - Ample exposure to be comfortable with material
- Follow-up
 - Were messages heard?
 - Did Bright Spots approaches make a difference to students/facilitators/environment?

Sharing Results

- Facilitator Training
 - Implemented new teaching and learning sessions
 - Incorporated Bright Spots (intention was to talk about it, but it came up organically)
 - Not able to “focus” on Bright Spots research
- Bright Spot Features (peer-to-peer sharing)
 - New this year
- Feels more positive
- Future plans: Look at changes in the FYE survey, survey instructors annually, another round of Bright Spots interviews, increasing “Bright Spot Features”

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Thank you!

- Questions
- Comments
- Ideas/suggestions

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