

FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE

Contact: Bob McGill



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YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio - Youngstown State University, through the combined efforts of administration, faculty and students, has formed the Student Enrichment Center (SEC) to aid in the college adjustment of new freshman students.

The program helps students build self-confidence, identify opportunities, develop a sense of direction and achieve their education goals.

Participants are assisted by SEC staff individually to set up realistic academic career and personal goals based on their interests and abilities. The student may participate for a full academic year or request short-term assistance.

The Student Enrichment Program, a modification of the original Student Retention Program, has a primary goal of improving student retention by reducing the number of drop-outs, particularly during their freshman year, and to give them a stronger foundation for their college careers.

Under the direction of Mary Ann Echols of Youngstown, director of YSU's Special Student Services, participation in the SEC has increased from 173 at the program's inception during the 1983-84 school year to more than 300 students at present.

Newly admitted students who have not previously attended college and are in the upper two-thirds of their high school graduating class with an ACT score of 13 or above are eligible. Referrals from high school guidance counselors, university faculty, staff and the Student Serving Students group are acceptable as well as self-referrals.

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Intake occurs during the first two weeks of each academic quarter after which students are accepted for short-term assistance on a walk-in basis. The program does not operate during summer.

Although students may leave the program at any time, they are asked to sign an agreement stating services offered and obligations expected of them. After an evaluation to determine readiness for leaving the program, a joint decision between student and staff is made.

Volunteers from the YSU faculty, representing 18 different departments, serve as mentors and consultants for the students. The peer assistants, 11 specially trained upperclass students, serve as helpers and friends during the participants' first year of college study. Support services, which include mid-term progress reports on students' grades and workshops designed especially for SEC participants, help to round out this unique program.

Dr. Charles McBriarty of Boardman, vice president for Student Services, said it is clear that the program has enabled participants to persist at a much higher rate than they might have, achieve better grades, make better progress toward their degrees, and develop personal skills that not only help them perform effectively but also are an important part of their development as citizens.

Statistics show the SEC participant group compared favorably with the non-participant freshman group. A total of 94.3 percent of the SEC students enrolling in the fall of 1983 completed three quarters at YSU contrasted to 80.5 percent of the students not participating in the fall 1983 freshman group. Also, the SEC students achieved a 2.73 composite grade point average during the 1983-84 academic year compared to the non-participants' GPA of 2.44.

The program has had a positive impact on student performance. Almost without exception, the SEC participant group achieved better quarterly grades than the control groups, with the lowest percentage of grades below 2.0 and the largest percentage of grades between 3.0 and 4.0.

BY BARBARA JOHNSON
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Reviewing reports on YSU's Student Enrichment program are, from left, Mary Ann Echols of Youngstown, director of the university's Special Student Services; Keith Kelly of Niles, freshman peer; and Connie Zinghini of Campbell, peer assistant. The program, designed to aid new freshmen in adjusting to college, helps them build self-confidence, identify opportunities, develop a sense of direction, and achieve their educational goals. It is also improving student retention and scholastic standing.

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