I’d like to introduce the first issue of Retention PIECES, a newsletter from the office of Instructional Support Services and Retention! Written by Lynne Johns, Associate Director, with contributions from Ryan Stadler, Advisement-Retention Specialist, and Kathy Quirk, Associate Dean, this publication replaces the Advisor Newsletter that we have produced for the past decade and hopefully will appeal to a broader audience. Retention PIECES will present articles on Practices, Ideas, Evidence, Connections, Events, and Successes related to student retention. We will highlight student-centered activities across campus; interview administrators, faculty, and staff; share research; recognize collaborative projects; publicize events; and commend faculty and staff efforts to eliminate some of the bumps in the road for our students.

In this inaugural issue of our newsletter, I’d like to tell you a little about my role as Associate Dean for Instructional Support Services and Retention, and about the people who work with me to increase students’ chances for academic success. Already responsible for the operation of the Office of Testing, Advisement, and Academic Placement; the Learning Assistance Center; and the Computer Learning Centers, I assumed a new title and retention responsibilities just over 16 months ago. In my expanded position, I am expected to know about current retention theory and practice and serve as a sounding board for new ideas. I am charged with providing information, resources, and support to departments and offices as they develop new initiatives. I am responsible for instigating the creation of policies, programs, and systems that support a student-centered campus environment that encourages students to stay at Hudson Valley.

I am in a position to promote and support campus retention efforts because of the monetary and personnel resources in the large area that I oversee. The Instructional Support Services and Retention unit includes an Associate Director; an Advisement-Retention Specialist; a Placement Testing Coordinator; 10 full-time faculty members; part-time faculty; a full-time Technical Assistant; clerical support; and part-time Technical Assistants, Professional Tutors, Peer Tutors, and work-study students. All of the offices are open and staffed 12 months a year and they are supported by both institutional and grant funding. We administer a placement testing program; assist with advisor training; provide one-on-one academic assistance for students during the day, evening, and on weekends; offer workshops and customized classroom presentations; run a Peer Tutoring program and a summer program; and provide funding and staff to support other office’s academic programs.

Within the last 16 months, with our broader emphasis on student retention, we have accomplished the following:

- Sponsored a Retention Symposium, attended by representatives from nine SUNY Community Colleges (June 2002);
- Lobbied for a new focus for New Faculty Orientation—community college teaching.

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Universal Design for Instruction

by Lynne Johns

The term Universal Design was the phrase first coined to describe a concept of designing buildings and spaces so that individuals, regardless of impairment, disability, or other circumstance, could gain access without worrying about “special accommodations.” According to the Center for Universal Design at the University of North Carolina web site (http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/univ_design/princ_overview.htm), Universal Design has its roots in social, economic, legislative, and demographic changes emerging during the 20th century. As the needs of a diversifying and aging population came to the forefront, and civil rights legislation (particularly the Americans with Disabilities Act) changed those needs into rights under the law, it became necessary to expand our ideas about access and accommodations.

For architects, the concept of using universal design at the outset of planning a space was more sensible than trying to later retrofit a building with accessories that would make it accessible to the broadest segment of the population. Proponents of this concept are quick to point out that Universal Design isn’t just for people who have physical disabilities, but that anyone, at any given time, could experience some difficulty trying to enter a building where the choice is limited to a set of stairs and a large, manually-operated door. What about people carrying packages or pushing baby carriages? These people aren’t considered disabled—yet the lack of access options could easily hinder their ability to utilize the space.

Educators, especially those concerned with students with learning and other disabilities, became very interested in the concept of Universal Design as it applied to access in education. Universal Design for Instruction (UDI) is the term used first by the University of Connecticut (UCONN) to describe the application of Universal Design principals to the educational environment. Faculty at UCONN used the original principals of Universal Design (created at University of North Carolina) and adapted them for UDI. The nine principals are intended as guides to help educators create educational environments that are inclusive of a much broader and diverse range of learners (see table 1.1, pg 3). UCONN publishes an online resource guide called Faculty Ware—Tools for the Universal Design for Instruction for educators who are interested in learning more about and implementing UDI.

Often the concept of Universal Design and technology become intertwined. Not surprising, as assistive technologies have improved, and other forms of media have become more accessible to classroom faculty, options for implementing UDI have become enormous. In fact, it may be the enormity that gives instructional faculty pause when thinking about applying UDI in their classrooms. UDI can seem like something unattainable and overwhelming—something better left to the more adventurous.

Focusing on the technology alone isn’t what it is all about. The Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) is a not-for-profit agency whose main purpose is to educate the public on how to use technology to expand opportunities for all people. In 1999, CAST organized the National Consortium on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This consortium is made up of educators, schools, and experts whose mission is to improve educational outcomes for all students— including those with disabilities. According to CAST co-Executive Directors, David Rose and Anne Meyers, there are some important distinctions to be drawn between UDI and UDL. Rose and Meyers have deliberately called their model Universal Design for Learning (rather than Instruction) to help identify the distinction between offering access to instructional methods and materials, versus access to learning. Although UDL encompasses the principals set forth by

(Continued on page 3)
UDI, the UDL model identifies access to constructivist learning as the central objective for educators. “The difference is in the goals”, writes Rose and Meyers. “Education is an exercise in constructing knowledge and skills. It requires a careful balance of support and resistance. Thus Universal Design for access provides the greatest amount of support possible at all times, while Universal Design for Learning requires careful attention to the goals of any given learning experience so that a balance of challenge and support can maximize the learning opportunity.” (Rose and Meyers, 2000).

This isn’t to imply that CAST doesn’t favor the use of new media and technology in the classroom. Quite the opposite is true. However, for educators who are just beginning to look at Universal Design and its possibilities, technology isn’t the first or only place to begin. Instructional techniques that incorporate principles of Universal Design can include things like: selecting textbooks that are also offered in a digital format; using a grading rubric for papers and projects to clearly define instructor expectations; allowing students to turn in smaller components of a large assignment or project for constructive feedback; encouraging students to organize study groups, email lists; and using various instructional methods (lecture with visuals, group work, student-led discussions, etc.) that allow for different ways of experiencing and learning the material (Shaw and McGuire, in press).

Universal Design has some important implications for the retention of students, especially those in traditionally at-risk populations. If educators are able to, through the implementation of universal design principals, increase access to learning for all students, colleges should see a positive impact on those who come through their doors with poor academic skills. The UDL model seems to mirror much of the philosophy of developmental education: help students become better life-long learners, rather than merely good students.

If you are interested in doing some further research and learning more about Universal Design theories and practices, please see the Web resources listed on page 6.


Table 1.1

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<tr>
<th>Universal Design Principles</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Principle 1: Equitable Use</strong></td>
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<td>Instruction is designed to be useful to and accessible by people with diverse abilities. Provide the same means of use for all students; identical whenever possible, equivalent when not.</td>
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<td><strong>Principle 2: Flexibility in Use</strong></td>
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<td>Instruction is designed to accommodate a wide range of individual abilities. Provide choice in methods of use.</td>
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<td><strong>Principle 3: Simple and intuitive</strong></td>
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<td>Instruction is designed in a straight forward and predictable manner, regardless of the student’s experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. Eliminate unnecessary complexity.</td>
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<td><strong>Principle 4: Perceptible Information</strong></td>
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<td>Instruction is designed so that necessary information is communicated effectively to the student, regardless of ambient conditions or the student’s sensory abilities.</td>
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<td><strong>Principle 5: Tolerance for Error</strong></td>
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<td>Instruction anticipates variation in individual student learning pace and prerequisite skills.</td>
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<td><strong>Principle 6: Low Physical Effort</strong></td>
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<td>Instruction is designed to minimize non-essential physical effort in order to allow maximum attention to learning.</td>
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<td><strong>Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use</strong></td>
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<td>Instruction is designed with consideration for appropriate size and space for approach, reach, manipulations use regardless of a student’s body size, posture, mobility, and communication needs.</td>
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<td><strong>Principle 8: A Community of Learners</strong></td>
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<td>The instructional environment promotes interaction and communication among student and between students and faculty.</td>
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<td><strong>Principle 9: Instructional Climate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instruction is designed to be welcoming and inclusive. High expectations are espoused for all students.</td>
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-University of Connecticut

www.Facultyware.uconn.edu
Welcome to PIECES

• Expanded a professional development program for LAC & CLC faculty that emphasizes learning theory;
• Provided stipends for CET Faculty Mentors;
• Developed customized workshops for College Forum students that focus on self-assessment and motivation;
• Collaborated with the CET to promote programs addressing pedagogy;
• Chaired a committee reviewing the College Forum course;
• Met with department chairs to explore the idea of course sections with extended contact hours for skills-weak students;
• Established the Student Outreach and Support team, hiring current Hudson Valley employees to call identified groups of students at scheduled times during the semester;
• Coordinated the faculty Early Warning System;
• Expansed the Peer Tutoring programs to include lab tutors and classmate study group leaders;

This semester, we hope to work with the Individual Studies department to provide additional support for identified at-risk students, recognize students who model behaviors associated with academic success, support faculty who facilitate learning communities, and explore policies that mandate instructional support for at-risk students.

If you have Practices, Ideas, Evidence, Connections, Events, or Successes that you want to talk about or share with others, visit our offices in the Guenther Enrollment Services Center, 227, suite or call Lynne Johns at #8068 or Kathy at #7234. I hope you enjoy this first newsletter.
The main goal of the Student Outreach and Support project (SOS) is to make connections with students to assist with their enrollment, registration, and ultimately, their retention. Via an individual phone call, SOS team members reach out to students at pivotal points during the term. At different times during the semester, SOS team members call and encourage students to
- Complete the admissions acceptance process;
- Register for classes; or
- Pay their bill.

The team also welcomes new students to the campus community with a phone call to find out how the first few weeks of the semester have been going.

The Student Outreach and Support project team views every interaction as an opportunity to build student loyalty by providing positive, proactive service to students, potential students, and their families. The SOS team consists of student service and academic support people from different departments across the Hudson Valley campus. Team members were chosen and hired for their ability to project a sense of community to students. This is something that is very difficult to develop through the use of a private call center. The callers ask questions and listen closely to the students’ tones and responses. Calls are made in an attempt to intrinsically motivate students toward positive, academic behavior, while providing accurate and supportive information.

The program coordinator reviews the calls made each evening and advises the appropriate offices if, for instance, a student has indicated that he/she won’t be returning and why. Student success stories are also collected and shared at the end of each calling session.

The project gauges the success of the call by the student’s or parent’s response. One of the long-term goals of the program as it relates to student retention is to become sensitive to subtle response patterns that may increase our understanding of students’ academic and learning habits. As the project moves forward, the coordinator will continue to look at the process of following-up on information shared during those conversations with students, and research other opportunities to make important connections.

The SOS team is coordinated by Ryan Stadler, Advisement/Retention Specialist in the Office of Instructional Support Services and Retention. The current SOS team consists of: Charmaine Darmetko (Office of Instructional Support Services and Retention), Selissa Dukes (Admissions), Dawn Germano (Financial Aid), Beverly Cootware (Learning Assistance Center), Kathleen Haynes (Learning Assistance Center), Donna Hall (Registrar’s Office), Jenifer Kish (The Foundation), Kristen Miller (Human Resources), Jeanne Petropol (Humanities and Behavioral Sciences), Fay Spargo (Workforce Development), and Deborah Spence (Center for Careers and Employment).

**What methods do you use to reward students who demonstrate positive academic behavior?**

Please share your ideas, techniques, and methods with us for inclusion in future newsletters. Please respond to Johnslyn@hvcc.edu.

Thank you!
The Early Warning System (EWS) is designed to institutionally support the faculty and academic departments in the identification of and communication with students who are having difficulty in the classroom and/or the college experience.

Presently, the EWS at Hudson Valley offers an opportunity for instructors to have a letter sent shortly after the third week of classes to all students they have identified as being “at risk”. The letter advises students to seek contact with the instructor/s that identified them. A Midterm letter is also sent to all students who received above a 2.0 GPA and to new students who fall below the 2.0 GPA mark. The group that falls below the 2.0 mark is strongly suggested to schedule a “Midterm Check” appointment with an academic advisor.

We should never lower our academic standards to increase retention. What we can do is identify students who aren’t demonstrating the type of behavior associated with academic success and give them a heads-up and a second chance.

Early Warning System letters let students know that they are noticed, before the missed classes, ignored readings, and late homework assignments overwhelming them and time is no longer on their side. Hopefully, a number of students will stop by and ask instructors or advisors about the letter. This is the opportunity for a timely discussion about College and course standards, appropriate classroom behavior, available support services, and the student’s role in the learning process.

End PIECES

Universal Design Resources

The Faculty Room—http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty/Strategies/Universal/
This site contains information on how to employ strategies of UDI with typical classroom and academic activities.

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) - www.cast.org

Faculty Ware—University of Connecticut—www.Facultyware.uconn.edu

Jennifer Miller, Learning Disabilities Specialist, Learning Assistance Center—x7552

New Advisor Training
March 10  2 p.m.— 5 p.m.
Please register by emailing Lynne Johns at johnslyn@hvcc.edu.